

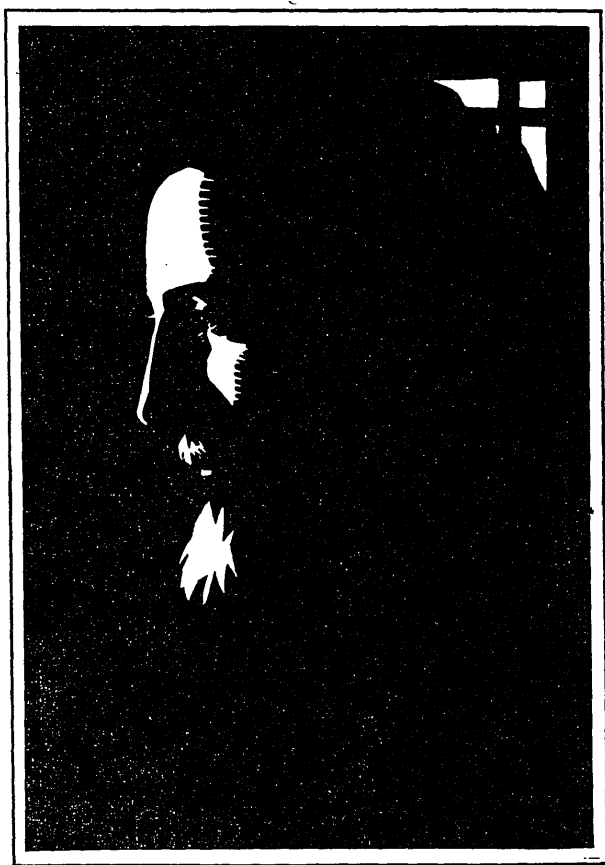
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*James Ashbrook*

# They Told About Jesus

ETHEL CUTLER



THE WOMANS PRESS • NEW YORK, N. Y.



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## A WARTIME BOOK

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
AMERICAN BOOK-STRATFORD PRESS, INC., NEW YORK

Dur.

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## *Foreword*

THE New Testament is the most widely circulated book in the world—and probably the most widely read, certainly in the West. The real reason why people read the New Testament is that it contains “the words of life.” Of course, even apart from this religious interest, the New Testament would be a fascinating book and one of the most important in all literature, viewed from the standpoint of human culture and the growth of civilization. But if this were the only reason for studying it, it would have relatively few readers. Instead, multitudes in every land, on all the seas, in camps and towns, behind the battle lines, in prisons and in prison camps, on rafts where the survivors of wrecked ships drift and pray for rescue, in countless churches, cathedrals and chapels, in great basilicas and in private oratorios—people are reading the New Testament. The reason for this widespread reading is that the New Testament tells us about Jesus.

Of course, one may read the New Testament and profit greatly from it, even without any attempt at scholarship, knowing little about the historical background or the conditions under which the earliest accounts of Jesus’ life and teaching were circulated, then handed down from one person to another by oral tradition and finally written out in the Gospels. The priceless jewel shines in any setting. At the same time it holds true that a sound equipment of accurate knowledge about the conditions of the times and the methods by which the tradition was handed down, the various forms it took, the circumstances surrounding the writing of the Gospels, and the needs they were intended to fill—all this is a decided advantage to the student.

In this, as in her other books, Miss Cutler has taken the

results of modern scholarship and has used them in explaining, in an attractive and interesting way, how the Bible came to us. It is characteristic that for her the religious interest is uppermost; at the same time this does not take the place of careful study and patient research. Hence the great value of her books in making available to the average reader the results of a century and more of scholarship which would otherwise be locked up between the covers of very technical works. I sincerely hope that the present volume may have the wide circulation and influence that it deserves.

FREDERICK C. GRANT

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## *To the Readers*

THIS is not a book about Jesus. It is a book written to help the readers discover Jesus for themselves. It is about some of his friends who knew him as a man among men, and then knew him so no longer. It is about other friends of his whose eyes never beheld him, whose ears never heard the sound of his voice, whose hands never rested on his shoulders, yet they, too, were impelled to tell what they had learned of him.

The Writer sought in *One Prophet—and Another* to trace the long, slow unfolding of the purposes of God, the way in which men of Israel, century after century, felt the urgency of his will in relation to their fellows. Slowly, ultimately only through the way of the Cross, they came to look upon all men as brothers. *One People Among Many* was written to suggest that through accepting the Cross we are free to enter into an appreciative understanding of people who differ from us as greatly as did the ancient Hebrews and their Semitic neighbors. It is the conviction of the Writer that one road to understanding the records about Jesus lies in comprehending his place in relation to the great Hebrew thinkers who, for more than a thousand years, were preparing the way for his coming; in appreciating the Hebrew background from which these records came, and in grasping the elements of universality which they contain.

With this background in mind, the Writer seeks in *They Told About Jesus* to trace the growth of the records about Jesus from the first eager recital of the events leading up to Calvary and the transforming experience which followed on the First Day of the week; through gathering into written

form the early memories of what he said, and the stories of how he went about doing good; the interpretation of his friends as to the significance of his life and death and resurrection; and the ultimate translation of this meaning from Hebrew modes of expression to Greek ways of thinking.

We need but slight knowledge of the transmission of early manuscripts to know that the oldest copies of the Gospels were written in capital letters without punctuation of any sort, least of all, quotation marks! We know enough of Hebrew ways of book making to appreciate the fact that the interest centered on what was written, not on who did the telling. We accept the fact that Matthew and Luke, writing a decade or more after Mark, used his Gospel freely, condensing or expanding the various narratives as they saw fit. We know that they had a second common source, the Sayings of Jesus. We are aware that each of the Gospels includes material not found in the others.

If we put even a little thought upon the close relation of the first three Gospels, and upon the Fourth, so different from the Synoptics and so rich in profound spiritual insights, we find ourselves saying, "But all these records about Jesus were written a generation or more after the crucifixion. Are there no earlier records either pagan or Christian? What do we really know of Jesus of Galilee?" Because many scholars have propounded these questions and, with unflagging devotion and great learning, have sought the answers, this little book attempts to recapture something of the mood of the century which produced the Gospels, and something of the devotion of those early followers of Jesus who passed on by spoken word or written scroll, the record not only of what Jesus began to do and to teach but, even more completely, the story of his suffering and of the transforming experience of his continuing life with them.

Like the Greeks of whom John wrote, we would see Jesus. Like them, we turn to those who knew him first to show him forth.

Some of them had heard him as he taught beside the sea,  
Some of them had loved him when he walked in Galilee,  
Some of them had seen him on the cross of Calvary—  
They told about Jesus.

Jews there were who saw in Jesus the Anointed One,  
Greeks triumphantly proclaimed him God's beloved Son,  
Romans, too, extolled him for the good that he had done—  
They told about Jesus.

To the men of many nations the joyful tidings spread,  
In Greek and then in Pliny's tongue the Golden Words were  
read,  
All life took on new meaning when they learned what Jesus  
said—  
They told about Jesus.

ETHEL CUTLER

Fellowship Forest  
St. Peter's Day, 1943





## *PART I. WERE YOU THERE WHEN THEY CRUCIFIED MY LORD?*

"He was nailed to the cruel wood with nails.  
He went to the Cross smiling.  
How resolute was He. How high were His thoughts.  
In which temples of freedom did He learn to give His life?  
From mortality He became immortal.

He was nailed to the cruel wood with nails.  
He went to the Cross smiling.  
Those cruel persons are not today nor their oppression.  
The only thing that remains is that Jesus is God.  
From limitedness He went unto unlimitedness.  
The holy light of His smiling self will be a blessing to India."

### *Were You There?*

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?  
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?  
Were you there when he rose from the dead?

**B**EWILDERED, baffled, confused—one of them, bereft of his ambitious dream, had been bitter even to a self-inflicted death—a little group of the intimates of the crucified Jesus huddled together in the home of Mary of Jerusalem. The Jewish Sabbath with all its hampering restrictions left them no choice but to await the morrow. "We were hoping that it was he who would redeem Israel." Over and over like a refrain the words came from the lips of first one and then another. And his tortured body awaited proper burial in a new tomb in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea.

The strange darkness of Friday when Jesus hung on the cross was as nothing to the engulfing blackness that imprisoned their spirits in a dungeon of despair. From sunset to sunset the ancient Jewish Law held them in its viselike grip. They were driven back toward the place where they had been before he came. All life's rigidities stalked about them and hemmed them in. Yet they could not go back. Shattered, brokenhearted men and women, they had loved him so that the old moorings had been swept away forever.

At long last the Sabbath ended. While it was still dark the women made their way through the narrow streets of the city and out to the garden where they had laid him. They must be near their dead. The first faint flush of dawn stirred across the blue hills of Moab. With sudden swift movement like a rush of wings the sun's bright edge pushed upward.

Arise, shine; for thy light is come,  
And the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

There in the garden they knew that "death had been swallowed up in victory." For Jesus came.

Not all who had known him in the days of his flesh beheld him in the weeks that followed. But he came, not only to the friends who had been with him in Galilee and in Jerusalem, but to a host of new-made friends as well. They heard the story from the lips of men and women who had loved him at the first and did not cease to love him. Over and over they recounted the tragedy of that hill outside the city gates, of the amazing wonder of the first day's dawning, of the experience in the garden, of his breaking bread with two men, one of them Cleopas by name.

They knew him when he broke the bread:  
Was it by the accompanying words he said  
Which faith, though faltering, understands?  
Or wounded beauty of his hands?

Luke wrote to Theophilus that

To the apostles whom he had chosen, he presented himself alive after his suffering, in many convincing ways.

Even earlier, Paul wrote to his friends in Corinth:

I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve; then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep; then he appeared to James; then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to the child untimely born, he appeared to me also.

Following that unforgettable first Easter there were days of ecstasy, of wonder and wild hope, days of doubt and uncertainty and confusion of mind, but in the end, triumphant, unquenchable assurance,

Now is Christ risen from the dead!

One of the profound realities of all life confronts us in this continuing faith in the resurrection. Fear was swallowed up in love, cowardice was transformed into courage, doubt gave place to steadfast conviction. From that day to this, men and women and little children,

A vast multitude which no man can number  
From every nation and tribe and people and tongue,

have found in this Jesus who was crucified, light for their darkness, bread for their hunger, water for their refreshing, the way, the truth, the life.

O Death, where is thy victory over Love?  
Thy worst, the cross of torture, crown of thorn,  
Love took and made exceeding joy thereof,  
Illimitable joy of Easter morn.

What of the earliest records of this transforming experience?

## *Some Things Taken for Granted*

**I**N EVERY age and among every group of people some things are taken for granted. They are the things which are not explained. They are that way. How often in India I used to ask, "Why not do this or that?" and receive the reply, "It isn't done." The very words have long been sung in a lullaby from Khandesh:

Never has it been so done, my human babe:  
The world is of a different sort.  
Thy cradle swings on the veranda,  
The moon swings in the clouds—  
Hush, Krishna, weep not, nor ask.

If we are to understand the records which we have in the four Gospels, we need to travel back from the twentieth century to the first century after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea. We must trek back in thought, and even more in feeling, from our world of science and industry, of philosophy and music, from days in which we are forced to think in terms of global contacts, to a world view so alien to our own that it is by no means easy to find our way there. We must appreciate not only the outlook of educated Romans; we must go behind even the Greek culture, to which in a profound sense we of the West are heirs, to our still more ancient heritage of Hebrew thought and action.

When Jesus lived in Galilee he and his friends spoke Aramaic as their forebears had done for some three centuries past. Aramaic is so closely kin to Hebrew that, though the Hebrew Scriptures needed interpretation into the vernacular, they did not contain foreign *ideas*. The way the

prophets thought of God still played a part. The poetry of the people still rang with the rhythms of the Psalter. The temple in Jerusalem was still the center of worship, especially at the time of the feasts when vast crowds of Jews and Gentile converts to Judaism poured into Jerusalem from near and far.

Despite all this, the great ethical teachings of the prophets had been almost buried beneath a mass of legalistic interpretation. So rigid and so minute had been the restrictions on conduct that inevitably all manner of casuistry had crept in to ease the intolerable load. One of the Sabbath regulations provided that a man could travel only a little over half a mile from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. But if early Friday he sent a slave ahead with food to await his arrival, he could travel thither on Sabbath, there eat his "lunch" and having thus established his "home" he could still go a Sabbath day's journey from "home"! Wherever righteousness is confused with legalism, such practices of man's devising spring up to ease the strain.

Although medical researches had gone far in ancient Egypt, very little was known in Palestine about dealing with disease.

The pestilence that walketh in darkness,  
The destruction that wasteth at noonday,

still struck men down. Why? Why? Why? There was an answer to this reiterated question. Every form of illness was a punishment for sin committed, accurately measured out to meet the guilt acquired. "For whose sin was this man born blind—for his own, or for that of his parents?" So far had the answer gone!

But insanity, the most distressing of all forms of illness, had an added explanation. A man out of his mind was possessed by a devil, an unclean spirit, or even a legion of devils, if the case was severe. Everybody knew that.

And though this world, with devils filled,

was not a line of poetry, but an accepted fact. Once I was talking with a group of girls from Ceylon and India about the Gerasene demoniac. Quite naturally, to my way of thinking, I spoke of him as violently insane. "Did you ever see a person possessed of a devil?" asked one of the girls. My negative reply left her sorrowful for my ignorance, but it explained why I had such a strange idea about demoniacs.

The prophets of Israel's past, from Moses even to the writer of the tract of Jonah, had been deeply concerned with great moral issues. Slowly the idea had grown that the God of the Hebrews, who had chosen them for his peculiar people, and required of them fair dealings with their fellow tribesmen, was the God of all the peoples of the earth, and demanded righteousness among all men, even as he was righteous. But as the voices of the great prophets were silenced, and multitudes of people still called "evil good, and good evil," men came more and more to think of God as outside the present world order altogether, but ready to break in on a Day of Judgment.

When would the Day of the Lord come? Manifold portents were recounted as signs of its near approach. Some saw it as a day when God's Anointed (the Hebrew word is transliterated *Messiah*; translated into Greek, *Christos*; into English, *The Anointed*) would set up a kingdom of righteousness with Jerusalem as his capital. Some believed that the Son of Man would come in the clouds of glory with his holy angels. The accounts of this coming are often called *apocalypses*, a transliteration of the Greek word from the root *to uncover, to reveal* that which is hidden. The last book of the New Testament, the *Revelation*, begins in Greek, *An apocalypse of Jesus Christ*. When one thinks of all the secret societies in which people in many parts of the world have taken refuge from their inadequacies, it becomes easy to understand how the Jewish people under the iron heel of their



oppressors had built up their secret (apocalyptic) hopes—uncovered to the initiated, but to them alone.

Those amazing cartoons, as the apocalypses have been called, are like all cartoons, intelligible only to those who know the events out of which they spring. No wonder we find the apocalypses difficult to comprehend. But the Jews of Jesus' day thought that way, and his early followers were no different from their fellow countrymen. Particularly in times of deep tragedy and suffering when there seems no way out, it is *secret* hopes, often fantastic in expression, but with concealed meaning, that pass underground from friend to friend.

Living in a flat world with God dwelling far off in the heavens above, and the devils having their home beneath the earth with entrances through caves and through the stormy seas, yet issuing forth in many forms to harass mankind; with plague and pestilence and lesser ills, the common lot of all men, and always their own fault; with prohibitions multiplied and refined till there were thirty-nine different ways of working on the Sabbath—no wonder the common people thought of themselves as the Pharisees described them, "accursed, who know not the Law." In this world Jesus lived for a few brief years and wrought vast changes whose ultimate significance far outstripped the imagination of even his most daring followers.

## *Publish Glad Tidings*

They, with a stranger, broke the bread:  
"Do this; remember Me!"  
And all at once they saw—not dead—  
His true reality:  
The outstretched hands, the love shed wide  
Of Him that had, yet had not died—  
And all the Life that was to be.

THE early followers of Jesus did not all think alike. They had come from widely different backgrounds. Some were Jews of Palestine, deeply imbued with the importance of the Mosaic Law. Some were Jews who had lived in one or another of the great Gentile centers, Antioch-on-the-Orontes, the university city of Tarsus, Egyptian Alexandria of the great library, Rome, the capital of the world. Many of these scattered Jews and Gentile proselytes, who had been up to Jerusalem on pilgrimage that great Passover season and had heard Peter and the others tell the story of Jesus, carried home the good news. Like Amos the herdsman of Tekoa, long before, they could but describe their experience,

The Lord himself hath spoken,  
Who can fail to pour forth his word?

They told the story of Caesarea Philippi, some one way, some another:

Jesus journeyed on with his disciples toward the villages near Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "What do people say about me?" They answered, "They say you are John the Baptizer, or Elijah, or one of the company of the prophets." Then he asked them, "And you, who do you think that I am?" And Peter gave the answer, "You are the Messiah!"

At that time many of his disciples withdrew and no longer followed him about. Then Jesus asked the Twelve, "Will you also leave me?" And Simon Peter answered, "Lord, whither shall we go? We have the faith and assurance that you are the Holy One of God."

Jews saw in Jesus their long-expected Messiah. Greeks saw in him the Holy One of God.

They sought to understand the meaning of the Cross. They soon discovered that to many a Jew the cross was a stumbling block; to countless Gentiles, most of all to proud Roman citizens, that cross was sheer foolishness. God's Holy One dying the death of the lowest criminal? Never! Why, even a Roman citizen who had become a traitor would be beheaded, and this carpenter was crucified!

Many simple people treasured the story of two humble followers of Jesus, one of them even his name forgotten:

Two of his disciples were walking to a village near Jerusalem, named Emmaus. And they were talking over all that had taken place. As they thus talked and pondered, Jesus himself drew near and went along with them; but they did not recognize him, for their eyes were holden. Then he said to them,

"What is it you are talking about, as you walk along?" They stopped still at this, and looked sad. And one of them, whose name was Cleopas, replied,

"Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who has not heard about the things that have taken place there during these days?"

When he asked "What things?" Cleopas answered him,

"About Jesus of Nazareth; he was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, whom our high priests and rulers handed over to be condemned to death, and so sent him to the cross. But we hoped he would redeem Israel."

Then he said to them:

"What fools you are—so slow to believe what the prophets have said! Must not the Messiah suffer all this, in order to enter into his glory?"

Then he began with Moses and all the prophets and ex-

plained the words of the scripture, which were written about him. So they came to the village to which they were going; but he appeared to be journeying on farther. But they would not let him, and said to him,

"Come and stay with us; it will soon be evening, and the day is about over."

So he went in to lodge with them. And when they sat down for the evening meal, he took bread and said the blessing over it, broke it and gave it to them. At that their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, but at once he vanished from their sight. And they said to each other,

"Was not our heart burning within us, while he talked with us on the way and explained the scripture to us?"

There was the key to the tragic mystery. They searched the scriptures. They read and reread those great psalms of suffering, Psalms 22, 31, 69. They found them full of references which brought vividly before them the hill of Calvary. Had not Jesus cast himself on the loving care of God as he hung on the cross, using the first words from one of those very psalms?

Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.

They even repeated the words in the strange tongue, so unlike their own musical Greek. Too long we have read only the translation of those first words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and, not knowing the psalm by heart as many of them did, have forgotten its triumphant climax,

Thou hast answered me!

Like the eunuch of Queen Candace of Ethiopia, they read the familiar words from the roll of the prophet Isaiah:

Like a sheep was he led away to be slaughtered,  
And just as a lamb is dumb before its shearer,  
He does not open his mouth.  
His sentence ended in his humiliation.  
Who will tell the story of his posterity?  
For his life is perished from the earth.

Many another preacher besides Philip, "starting from this passage, told the good news about Jesus." Many another traveler like the eunuch, "full of joy, went on with his journey," and told his friends at home what had happened by the way. Little by little the friends of the crucified Jesus began to see how the unrealized hopes, the unfulfilled longings of psalmists and prophets were indeed filled full of new meaning, showing forth the purposes of God.

Because they were so sure that Jesus would come back speedily, they had no interest in writing about him. The Jews, true to their culture, naturally passed the story of Jesus from person to person, from group to group, by word of mouth. And quite as naturally, in a relatively short time there grew up an accepted form of the Passion-and-Easter story, always told so as to show the purposes of God at work. There was no obligation on people to repeat the story exactly, and gradually there came to be various ways in which the earliest formulation was remembered. There were brief summaries, like the one Luke wrote of Peter's words to the centurion Cornelius:

You know what took place in the land of the Jews: how, following the baptism which John had preached, the Gospel began in Galilee with Jesus of Nazareth. God anointed him with holy Spirit and with power. And he went about the country and did much good, and healed all that were in the devil's power, for God was with him. And they hanged him on a tree and put him to death.

God wakened him on the third day, and let him appear visibly, not before all the people but before those witnesses whom God had previously chosen. And he bade us preach to the people and to proclaim: He is the one whom God has ordained to judge the living and the dead. All the prophets bear witness to him, that every one who believes in him shall through his name receive forgiveness of sins.

The great hymn of the early Christians which Paul recalled to his Philippian friends moves with a stately rhythm:

He lived a divine existence,  
but thought nothing of grandeur  
nor of the glory of divine nature;  
he gave up glory and grandeur,  
taking a poor existence in exchange,  
became humanlike in form,  
and humanlike in bearing.  
He chose renunciation,  
obedient to death,  
to death upon the cross.  
Therefore God exalted him to highest glory  
and gave him the name above all names.  
Now at the name of Jesus  
let every knee bow, of all that live and move  
whether in heaven or earth or the underworld,  
and let every tongue confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord—  
to the honor of God the Father.

In its stark unadorned tragedy we have the record as preserved in Mark—ending with the empty tomb. There is no extant manuscript that has preserved the lost ending which in dramatic sequence should have told of the meeting of Jesus with his disciples and Peter in Galilee. If, through the help of a harmony of the Gospels, we lift out of Luke's narrative those sections of the passion story which he inserted from Mark to enrich his earlier account, we then have a second narrative, less stark, with now and again a touch of that literary quality which imparts such haunting beauty to his Gospel. Matthew expands Mark's account with tales which enhance the marvelous. John, true to his purpose, so completely transforms his sources that we cannot recover the original wording, but he does make clear the fact that Jesus was crucified on the eve of Passover, when the paschal lambs were slain. Mark has one such memory:

Now after two days was the feast of the passover and the unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him with subtlety, and kill him: for they

said, Not during the feast, lest haply there shall be a tumult of the people.

In his main narrative Mark shares the conviction which grew up among the Christians in Greece and Rome that the meal which Jesus ate with his disciples must have been the Pass-over.

Before any of our Gospels were written—perhaps before any of the accounts in the Gospels had taken shape—Paul, who says nothing of a Passover meal, follows the good Jewish custom of *taking over* and *handing on*:

I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, in the night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come.

All these writers see in this simple meal the beginning of the fellowship which has bound together the followers of Jesus in an experience so deep, so soul searching, so satisfying that in many forms and with many interpretations it continues as the supreme sacrament of the Christian Church.

## *PART II. MANY TELL ABOUT JESUS*

Stephen, who died while I stood by consenting,  
Wrought in his death the making of a life,  
Bruised one hard heart to thought of swift repenting,  
Fitted one fighter for a nobler strife.

Stephen, the Saint, triumphant and forgiving,  
Prayed while the hot blows beat him to the earth.  
Was that a dying? Rather was it living!—  
Through his soul's travail, my soul came to birth.

Stephen, the Martyr, full of faith and fearless,  
Smiled when his bruised lips could no longer pray—  
Smiled with a courage undismayed and peerless—  
Smiled!—and that smile is with me night and day.

### *Driven from Jerusalem*

**A**T FIRST it had been very simple. Anguished fears and ardent hopes had been resolved into a glorious certainty,

Now is Christ risen from the dead!

With a few swift strokes of the stylus on his papyrus roll  
Luke sketched the fading memory of that rosy past:

The believers all shared everything they had with one another, and sold their property and belongings, and divided the money with all the rest, according to their special needs. Day after day they all went regularly to the temple, they broke their bread together in their homes, and they ate their food with glad and simple hearts, constantly praising God and respected by all the people. And every day the Lord added people who were saved to their number.



Most of the company were, like the Galilean fishermen, no real threat to the entrenched champions of the ancient Law. They frequented the temple, and prayed with great fervor the prayers of the ancient Jewish ritual:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the Redeemer of Israel.  
To Jerusalem, Thy city, return in mercy, and dwell therein as  
Thou hast spoken;  
Rebuild it soon in our days as an everlasting building, and  
speedily set up therein the throne of David,  
Speedily cause the branch of David, Thy servant, to flourish,  
and let his horn be exalted by Thy salvation,  
Because we wait for Thy salvation all the day.

Magnified and hallowed be His great Name in the world which  
He created according to His will.  
May He establish His Kingdom in your lifetime and in your  
days, and in the lifetime of all the house of Israel speedily  
and in a near time. And say ye, *Amen*.  
May His great Name be blessed forever and to all eternity.

Not even the commotion about the healing of a lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple had caused serious trouble. True, Peter and John had the temerity to tell the Council,

We must obey God rather than men.

Yet the advice of the worthy Gamaliel had seemed sound:

If this idea or movement is of human origin, it will come to nought, but if it is from God, you will not be able to stop it. You may actually find yourselves fighting God!

But it was quite another matter when the brilliant young Stephen from the provinces began to debate with his betters in the synagogue of the North African Jews who came from Libya, Cyrene (near Bengazi) and Alexandria, and of the Jews from Cilicia in Asia Minor, whence came Saul of Tarsus. They dragged Stephen before the Sanhedrin, meeting in the Temple court.

This fellow is never done talking against this holy Place and the Law!

they cried. The ardent young Pharisee from Tarsus was all for putting an end to temporizing with this blasphemy. He had studied at the feet of Gamaliel, but he would have no more of that revered teacher's plea for tolerance of the new faith.

Stephen was given a chance to defend himself. "Listen, brothers and fathers," he began—and he carried their thought step by step from Abraham's obedience to the will of God by the waters of the far-off Euphrates to the obedience of Jesus on Golgotha's barren heights.

Which of the prophets did your fathers fail to persecute? They killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Just One. And here you have betrayed him, murdered him!—you who received the Law that angels transmitted and have not obeyed it!

The learned men were furious. They dashed upon the presumptuous blasphemer who had dared to cry, "I see the Son of Man standing at God's right hand." They dragged him outside the city gates. They rained cruel stones upon him. They knocked him to his knees. What was that they heard him say? "Lord, let not this sin stand against them!"

Outwardly composed, outwardly consenting, Saul of Tarsus guarded the garments of the young men, but as each stone did its deadly work, his heart was torn and lacerated with wild inner conflict. What had Gamaliel said, "You might even find yourself fighting God!" Never! He would stamp out this blasphemy even to the ends of the earth. Duly authorized by the Sanhedrin he set out for Damascus.

And on the road he met Jesus. Thenceforth he became a preacher of the Way.

But the Jewish authorities drove many of the followers of this new and evil way out of the Holy City. Some of the fugitives went as far as Antioch-on-the-Orontes (near the present Beirut). The Palestinian Jews told the good tidings to their Jewish brethren in this great Greek city, but Jews from Cyprus and Cyrene where they had many Greek friends naturally told the Greeks. And lo, because of the glowing faith of that little group of refugees, most of whose names have even been forgotten, there sprang up a company of the followers of Jesus, derisively called Christians. In due time came Barnabas, always true to his name, Son-of-Encouragement. He brought Saul from Tarsus. The people of Antioch first heard of Jesus through men who had never intended to come there. But as the number of the Christians grew, they became convinced that this gift of God in Jesus Christ must not be kept in one Greek city. They sent Saul and Barnabas forth as missionaries to spread the glad tidings throughout Asia. A new day began to dawn. A new way began to unfold.

## *What Happened in Antioch?*

Not many who are wise with merely human wisdom, not many of position and influence, not many of noble birth have been called.

THE death of Stephen had a profound effect upon the life of the early followers of the Way. As long as the leaders remained in Jerusalem, confidently expecting the speedy return of Jesus, the wine of the new faith was still kept in the wineskins of the Jewish way of life. When now and again a Gentile convert, like the Ethiopian eunuch or the Roman Cornelius, was drawn into the growing circle, the yoke of the Law was placed upon his shoulders. But now a party of fugitives were preaching in Antioch to Greeks as well as Jews. And the new wine burst the old wineskins.

True it was that many Jews in Antioch, like their fellow religionists in Corinth a decade later, found in the Cross an insurmountable stumbling block. How could it be otherwise? They held with passionate devotion to every letter of the sacred Law. And had not Moses said:

If a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree; his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt surely bury him the same day; For he that is hanged is accursed of God.

The Jews were not puzzled by that word *tree*, as some of us have been. The same word in Hebrew is used both for a living tree and for a cross made from a tree. Hung on a tree, Jesus was accursed of God and not God's Anointed!

When Death and Shame would woo Him last,  
From under the trees they drew Him last:  
'Twas on a tree they slew Him last,  
When out of the woods He came.

Many Greeks in this great pagan city—only Rome with her seven hills and Alexandria of the great library were more populous—found this story of the cross utter foolishness, like those other superstitions of dying gods who rose again—Mithra, Osiris, even the mystery of Eleusis. Their world was full of nature myths that rested back on the ever-recurrent miracle of spring. But other Greeks found in the story of a crucified Savior something quite different, even though strangely kin to some of their earlier experiences. They had been accustomed already to a sacramental meal where one partook of the very life of the god. But this new experience held depths of meaning such as none other could offer. This Jesus whom his friends declared to be the Christ had really lived in Galilee, had really died on a cross outside the gates of a nearby city. And as they surrendered themselves to the new faith, they also knew the experience that, where two or three were gathered together in his name, there was he in the midst.

“You see, among us Jews,” Lucian of Cyrene may have explained to his Greek friends, “a name has great significance. When Rachel died, Jacob named their infant son Benjamin, Child-of-My-Right-Hand. It was a prayer that the child might be a comfort to him through the years of his loneliness. And Beerli saw the evil ways of his beloved people and prayed that his baby boy, Hosea (Jesus), might be indeed a *savior* to his people. Even so, a messenger from God bade Joseph name the young child Jesus, for it is he who is to *save* his people from their sins. The Name among us is the very symbol of the personality.”

Before long it began to be apparent that there was an ever-widening gulf between the loyal Jews who held to the Law

and all its accompanying implications and those followers of the Way—presumptuous fools!—as if there were any Way but the Way of Moses! But these Christians were, as Josephus later recognized, almost like a different race, so great had been the change wrought in them through their association with their risen Lord. Jews and Greeks alike, they had been saved from fears of demons, of disease, disaster, disobedience to the Law and stalking death. They had been saved to health, to happiness, to holy living and to glowing hope of everlasting life. Thus far their experience was like that of the first followers of the Way. But there were differences.

In Jerusalem the friends of Jesus who had known him in Galilee needed no one to tell them about his daily life among them. Even those who had not been with him were intent upon his swift return. Moreover, they had been brought up in the Jewish pattern of life and conduct. Were not the great commandments written in the ancient Law?

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might.

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Had not their prophets called them to upright living?

Let justice roll down as waters,  
And righteousness as an ever-flowing stream.

But here in Antioch it was quite different. The Greeks had no such heritage of a way of life. Moreover, Stephen had been martyred and others had fallen asleep, and still Jesus delayed his return. Or did he? What was the inner meaning of that cryptic word of his? Did he say, "The kingdom of God is among you," or "The kingdom of God is within you"? How often they had prayed to take upon themselves the yoke of the kingdom:

We hope in Thee, O Lord our God; that we may speedily see the glory of Thy might, . . .

When the world shall be set right in the Kingdom of the Almighty; and all the children of flesh shall call upon Thy Name.

When Thou wilt turn unto Thyself all the wicked of the earth, that all the inhabitants of the world may perceive and know That to Thee every knee must bow, every tongue swear . . .

And let them take upon themselves the yoke of Thy Kingdom, and do Thou reign over them forever and ever.

They began to understand Jesus in a new way. One of their preachers said, "Would you know what he is like? Listen, brothers of the Way. Hear him saying:

Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy burdened,  
And I will give you rest:

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me.

For I am gentle, and my heart is with the lowly,

And you shall find rest for your souls,

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Yes, Jews and Greeks alike, his yoke should be theirs.

Then they must know not only the glorious fact of his redeeming love on Calvary, but those things which he began both to do and to teach as well. There they would find the answer to the way in which they must meet life day by day. And as they began to live out his life, they began also to add new teachings to the ancient Jewish Scriptures which they had searched with such diligence to explain the meaning of the Cross. That what they wrote would be of permanent significance was far from their thoughts, but they could not help thinking of the promise of Jeremiah of the day of a new teaching from God. Surely that day was drawing near:

I will put my law within them,  
Writing it on their hearts;  
And I will be a God to them,  
And they to me a people;

No longer shall they have to teach  
Their fellows, each instructing each,  
How to know the Eternal; for they all  
Shall know me, both the great and small;  
For I will pardon their offenses,  
Their sin I never will recall.

The Jews who had known Jesus remembered this incident and that which had meaning for their daily problems. The Greeks, whose cultural heritage made it natural for them to write, began to prepare little rolls of manuscript of what Jesus taught and what he wrought. Of course the writing was done in Greek, though Jesus had taught in Aramaic. But Jews in Antioch were truly bilingual. They thought with equal ease in either language. They remembered his words and translated for their Greek friends, often quite unconsciously, yet now and again recalling a word that had special warmth of meaning in the Aramaic, "Abba, Father," or "Talitha, cumi, Little Daughter, arise!"

The earliest stories to be written down had to do with specific questions of everyday life. There was the Jewish law of Sabbath observance. What about that? One of the preachers recalled an incident which helped to shed light on the problem:

It happened once that he was going through the fields on a Sabbath, and his disciples picked off heads of grain as they went along. And the Pharisees said to him, "See how they do what is forbidden on the Sabbath!" He replied to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need, and he and his men were hungry?—how he went into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the showbread, which it is unlawful for any but the priests to eat—and even gave some to his men?" And he said to them:

"The Sabbath was made for man,  
And not man for the Sabbath."

"You know the Law," the preacher continued, "On the



Sabbath day thou shalt do no work,' and the interpreters of the Law declare that to pluck the grains of wheat is to reap. But we know that the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Could it have been Manean, the foster-brother of Herod, who told them an incident not found today in any of our Gospels, but preserved in a sixth-century manuscript from southern France?

He saw a man working on the Sabbath and said to him, "Man, if thou knowest what thou art doing, blessed art thou; but if thou dost not know, thou art accursed and a transgressor of the Law."

And one who was a teacher told a story:

In Jerusalem near the sheepgate is a pool, called in Hebrew Bethzatha, surrounded by five porticoes; there lay a great number of sick people—blind, crippled and lame. Among them was one who had already dragged along for thirty-eight years with his trouble. Jesus saw him lying there and noted that he had been ill for a long time; and he asked him, "Would you too like to be well?" "Ah, Sir," the man replied, "I have no one to carry me into the pool when the water bubbles: and before I can get there myself, someone is always ahead of me." Then Jesus said to him, "Stand up, take your bed, and go!" And the man actually was made sound, and took up his bed and was able to go.

Now the day was Sabbath, and the Jews said to the man who was healed, "It is Sabbath, and you must not carry your bed." He replied to them, "The one who healed me, he said, 'Take your bed and go.' " And they asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take it and go?'" He said to them it was Jesus who had healed him. On this account the Jews persecuted Jesus, since he had done this on the Sabbath.

Excavations have been conducted in Jerusalem on the probable site of this ancient pool. The level of the present city is some twenty feet higher than it was in Jesus' day. One

goes down a long flight of steps and walks among the carved porticoes where the sick and suffering lay so long ago. Deep in the solid rock somewhat above this pool of Bethesda is a smaller pool fed by a spring and by the seepage from the rains. The water empties into the lower pool through a natural syphon caused by the irregular stratification of the rock. This accounts for the "bubbling of the waters." During the rainy season, the syphon may discharge into the pool four or five times a day, and in dry weather at much less frequent intervals. To an unscientific age, who but a "messenger from God" could "trouble the waters"?

From time to time an angel of the Lord went down into the pool and stirred up the water. Whoever first stepped into the pool after the trembling of the water regained his health, no matter from what ailment he suffered.

Thus an ancient scribe added his "footnote" to the story.

Some of the Christians in Antioch wanted to know about prayer. Yes, Jesus taught his disciples one simple prayer, which even now was becoming infinitely precious. He had said to his friends,

Do not babble in prayer like the heathen,  
Who think to be heard for their chatter.

He bade them pray quite simply,

Father, hallowed be thy Name!  
Let thy kingdom come;  
Give us this day our bread, until the morrow,  
And forgive us our offenses  
As we also forgive them that offend against us;  
And lead us not into temptation.

A poet among them remembered one of Jesus' matchless little poems:

Ask, and it will be given you;  
Seek, and you shall find;  
Knock, and you shall be let in.  
Whoever asks, receives;  
Whoever seeks, finds;  
Whoever knocks, is admitted.

When your son asks for bread,  
Will you offer him a stone?  
When he asks for fish,  
Will you offer him a serpent?  
Even so, if you, for all your badness,  
Give good things to your own children,  
Certainly then the Father will give from heaven  
Good things to all who ask him!

Perhaps it was Simeon, called Niger, whose imagination had been fired by one of the stories Jesus told:

Two men went up to pray in the temple; one was a Pharisee and the other a publican. The Pharisee posted himself in the most conspicuous place and prayed: "I thank thee, O God, that I am not like the rest of men, rogues and knaves, adulterers, or even like this publican. I fast twice a week, and give the tithe of everything I make." The publican, on the other hand, stood far back and dared not even lift his eyes toward heaven, but struck his breast and said, "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" I tell you this man went home at peace with God, and not that first one!

No wonder they talked together about forgiveness. The words of Jesus opened up vistas never even glimpsed before. When Peter came from Jerusalem, they asked him about it, and he replied, "Once I asked Jesus, 'How often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him, Until seven times?' Would you know what Jesus said?"

'Not, Until seven times,  
But, Until seventy times seven.' "

A great light spread over the face of one of the Antioch

Jews. "Now I understand," he exclaimed. "No wonder they tell how men of old said one thing and he another. We are to *forgive* times without number. Our forefathers sought *revenge* till seventy times seven!" And he began to chant a little poem that he had known from a child, the proud boast of Lemek of old:

Adah and Zillah, listen to me,  
O wives of Lemek, hear what I say:  
The man who wounds me, him I slay,  
I slay a boy for a blow:  
If Cain be avenged seven times,  
Then seventy and seven times Lemek!

One of the others solemnly quoted, "Thus saith the Lord: Vengeance is mine and recompense." But Paul summed up the whole matter:

Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.

Not one small book nor many large ones could contain all the story, even if we really knew how the church grew in Antioch, what Barnabas and Saul and Peter preached there, who of the forgotten friends of Jesus helped recall his words and his deeds. Of this we can be sure—the death of Stephen wrought vast changes in the life and thought of the early Christians, not only in Antioch but in other Jewish-Greek communities as well. What are some of the assured results of the study of the "Gospel before the Gospels" which we may well explore?

## *Eyewitnesses and Ministers of the Word*

Hear the word that Jesus spake  
Long ago and far away,  
"Raise the stone and thou shalt find me,  
Cleave the wood and there am I."

SO FAR as we can recover the probable way in which the remembered facts about Jesus began to be written down, the first impulse came from the need of the preachers for brief, telling illustrations out of the life of Jesus. There was no attempt at biography. His early followers were not literary men. Some of them were deeply interested in the words that he spoke, in the stories that he told, some recalled the occasion of this word or that, others were chiefly concerned with his mighty works, and a few with the people whom he numbered among his friends.

The forms in which these special interests found expression were, at the first, quite like the forms used in recounting similar words and works of other outstanding leaders, both Jews and Greeks. It is as we appreciate how truly Jesus was one with his contemporaries that we become aware of fresh significance in the first formulated creed of Christians,

Jesus Christ is Lord.

Josephus, writing toward the close of the first century speaks of a "wise man, named Jesus." And an unknown Christian, writing some fifty years later a little book known as *The Acts of Paul*, recounts how Paul came to the house of Onesiphorus in Iconium and "there was great joy, and bowing of knees, and breaking of bread." Then Paul said,

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.  
Blessed are they that receive the wisdom of Jesus Christ, for  
they shall be called sons of the Most High.

More than one of the sayings of Jesus was remembered because he used the familiar form of the ancient wisdom, and gave a fresh turn to familiar ideas. David had quoted to Saul a proverb of the ancients,

Out of the wicked cometh forth wickedness,

and Jesus said,

The good man from his good treasure brings out what is good,  
And the evil man from his evil treasure brings out what is evil;  
For from what fills the heart,  
The mouth speaks.

Jesus ben Sirach wrote,

Lay up your treasure according to the commandments of the  
Most High,  
And it will be more profitable to you than gold.  
Store up gifts to charity in your storerooms,  
And it will deliver you from all harm,

and two centuries later Jesus of Nazareth said,

Store up no treasures for yourselves on earth,  
Where moth and rust corrode,  
Where thieves break in and steal:  
Store up treasures for yourselves in heaven,  
Where neither moth nor rust corrode,  
Where thieves do not break in and steal.

Some of his Greek followers must have recalled their own familiar aphorisms,

Look that thy measures are true; 'tis best to give more than  
just measure.

Give to the poor man at once, nor tell him to come on the  
morrow.

When thy right hand is filled full, share what thou hast with  
the needy,

when they heard the preacher quote the words of Jesus,

Give to the man who begs from you,  
And turn not away from him who wants to borrow.

Give,  
And it shall be given you:  
Good measure, pressed down, shaken together,  
running over, shall be poured into your lap.

The disciples of Jesus called him Rabbi, Teacher, and treasured not only the words that he spoke but, as was the case with other Jewish rabbis, the circumstances in which he had uttered a significant statement. One of the stories told of Hillel is remembered because of his summary of Jewish Teaching:

An incident concerning a non-Jew who came before Sham-mai. He said to him: "Make me a proselyte under the condition that thou teachest me the whole Torah while I stand on one leg." Thereupon he repulsed him with a rod which he had in his hand. He came before Hillel. He made him a proselyte. He said to him: "What thou hatest do not to thy neighbor. This is the whole Torah and all else is an interpretation. Go, learn."

The occasion on which Jesus spoke in similar fashion is not even known:

Think not that I have come to destroy the Law and the  
Prophets:

I have not come to destroy, but to enforce them in full:

Whatsoever you would that men should do unto you,

Do you also unto them;

This is the Law and the Prophets!

But there are many brief incidents in the Gospels, stripped of almost every detail yet vivid, dramatic, unforgettable, remembered for the word that Jesus spoke. How artists in every land have loved to paint one tiny picture:

They brought children to him, that he should bless them; but the disciples objected to this. When Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said, "Let the children come to me! Don't send them away! For it is the childlike who enter the Kingdom of God!

I tell you truly,

Whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child,  
He will not enter therein."

And he took them in his arms, and laid his hands upon them and blessed them.

Long before Nathan entered the presence of the great King David and told him the story of the one ewe lamb, the Hebrew people had passed down many a parable around their campfires, and long after they were scattered up and down the length and breadth of the Roman empire they continued to tell such stories. With the freedom of all great storytellers, they plucked the ideas where they found them and shaped them to the need of the hour. The purpose of a parable is always to teach. Sometimes the meaning is obvious. Sometimes the "dark sayings" are meant to make people think. Sometimes there is both an obvious and a deeper meaning.

Jesus was probably familiar with the parables which the angel told to Ezra:

Suppose a sea lies in a broad expanse, so that it is wide and vast, but the entrance to it is located in a narrow space, so that it is like a river; if anyone is determined to reach the sea, to see it or master it, how can he reach the broad water unless he passes through the narrows?

Suppose a city is built and located on level ground, and is full of all good things, but the approach to it is narrow and precipitous, so that there is fire on the right hand and deep water on the left, and there is only one path lying between



them, that is, between the fire and the water, so that the path can support the steps of only one man. Now if that city is given to a man as an inheritance, if the heir does not pass through the danger that lies before it, how can he receive his inheritance?

With what consummate skill Jesus draws the whole picture in a few brief words,

Go in by the narrow gate!  
Wide is the gate and broad the path to destruction,  
And many there be that follow it!  
But narrow the gate and strait the path of life,  
And few there be that follow it!

Out of a short saying of one of the rabbis,

Be not like servants who serve their master under the condition that they receive a reward, but rather like servants who serve their master under the condition that they receive no reward,

Jesus made a little story:

Perhaps one of you has a slave out plowing or watching the herd. When he comes in from the field, he will not say, "Come and sit down and eat"—instead he will say, "Get my meal ready; then gird yourself and wait on me until I have eaten; afterward you can eat and drink." Does he offer the slave any thanks for doing what he tells him? So you too ought to think, when you have done everything that has been commanded you: Mere good-for-nothing slaves are we; we have done no more than our duty.

As the preachers recalled sometimes only the words of Jesus, sometimes those words in their setting, so the teachers told not only his parables, but tales of his mighty works as well. And after the manner of storytellers even until now, they embellished the accounts with bits of detail which added human interest to the bare facts, such as the circum-

stances surrounding a cure, the seriousness of an illness, how hopeless the possibility of recovery, by what means the cure was effected, how amazed were all who heard of it! Thus Philostratus tells of Apollonius of Tyana:

A girl had died just in the hour of her marriage, and the bridegroom was following her bier lamenting as was natural his marriage left unfulfilled, and the whole of Rome was mourning with him, for the maiden belonged to a consular family. Apollonius then, witnessing their grief, said: "Put down the bier, for I will stay the tears that are shedding for this maiden." And withal he asked what was her name. . . . Merely touching her and whispering in secret some spell over her, he at once woke up the maiden from her seeming death; and the girl spoke out loud and returned to her father's house, just as Alcestis did when she was brought back to life by Hercules.

The comment which follows quite evidently comes from a Westerner and not from a Hebrew, who would not have speculated thus:

Now whether he detected some spark of life in her, which those who were nursing her had not noticed—for it is said that, although it was raining at the time, a vapor went up from her face—or whether life was really extinct, and he restored it by the warmth of his touch, is a mysterious problem which neither I myself nor those who were present could decide.

By comparing this story of the young girl's death with the story of the young man from Nain we gain interesting insights into the difference in point of view of Jews and Greeks:

He came to a town by the name of Nain, and his band of disciples entered with him and a great crowd of people. And as they approached the city gate, lo, they were bearing forth a dead man, the son of a widow, and many persons were there. He stepped forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I command you, get up!"

Then the dead man sat up and began to speak. And they were all overwhelmed with amazement, and praised God and said, "A great prophet has appeared among us," and "God has come to the help of his people."

One day when a group of us, heirs of Western thought, were riding across the Judean hills we saw in the distance some peasant women straight as tree trunks, carrying great loads of dry weeds upon their heads, the fuel of the common people of Palestine—"grass in the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven." Then we remembered how the blind man of Bethsaida, when his eyes were first opened, saw people as trees walking!

As they came to Bethsaida, they brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. So he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village. Then he put spittle in his eyes, laid his hands upon him, and asked, "Can you see anything?" And he looked and said, "I can make out people, for I see something like trees moving about." Then Jesus again laid his hands upon his eyes; and he looked sharply in front of him; so he was healed and was able to recognize everything clearly.

The eyewitnesses and ministers of the word passed on single sayings of Jesus, groups of sayings, incidents leading up to significant utterances, parables, stories of Jesus' un-failing compassion for suffering. And in time many of these precious memories were recorded on little rolls of papyrus for the use of preachers and teachers.

Some of these types of writing persisted for long among the Christians. One of the rich contributions of archeology has been the recovery of some of these treasures. From the sands of Oxyrhynchus in Egypt during the last decades, there have come papyrus fragments of sayings of Jesus which were treasured by the Christians in the second century, some of them undoubtedly first spoken by the Lake of Galilee. The sayings begin *Jesus saith*, not *Jesus said*:

Jesus saith, I stood in the midst of the world, and in the flesh was I seen of them, and I found all men drunken, and none found I athirst among them, and my soul is in trouble over the sons of men, because they are blind in their heart and see not.

As one reads this passage and thinks of the familiar words of Jesus in our Gospels, two things stand out—the style and the content. The style instantly suggests the Fourth Gospel. It was a common device for a Greek writer to put on the lips of his hero words which were chosen to describe his character. Swift as thought we say to ourselves, “Oh, no! Jesus was not like that. Those are not his words. He was never so black a pessimist. He told how some seed did not take root, but how other seed yielded a rich harvest.”

But there are other passages from these papyrus fragments which seem very like the Man of Galilee, some which even echo familiar sayings:

Jesus saith: Wherever there are two, they are not without God, and wherever there is one alone, I say, I am with him. Raise the stone and there shalt thou find me; cleave the wood and I am there.

Jesus saith: A prophet is not acceptable in his own country, neither does a physician work cures on those that know him.

This last couplet may well be the correct memory of Jesus' words in Nazareth.

From another fragment we have other words which were quoted in part by Clement of Alexandria, one of the early writers in the Christian Church, as from the Gospel according to the Hebrews. The papyrus is much mutilated. The parts in parentheses are restored by inference or from Clement's quotation:

These are the . . . words which Jesus, the living (Lord) spake to . . . and Thomas, and he said unto them, Whosoever (shall hearken) unto these words shall not taste (of death).

Jesus says: Let not him that seeks (the kingdom?) cease until he find it, and when he finds it (he will be astonished). Astonished (i.e., marveling) he shall attain the kingdom, and (having attained) he shall rest.

Jesus saith: The kingdom (of heaven) is within you. Whosoever shall know himself shall find it. (Strive therefore) to know yourselves, (and ye shall know that) ye are sons of the Father.

These words may have been written down by a Greek Christian who was familiar with the Greek teaching, "Know thyself."

All down the centuries the imagination of mankind has played around the character of Jesus, what he must have been like and, being like that, what he must have said and done. Some of the tales are fantastic, as anyone who has read from the Apocryphal Gospels realizes, and we toss such tales away as of little worth as a record of Jesus; but some of them are so full of a great longing to know him as he must have been that they are as hands uplifted in prayer, "We would see Jesus." Others have caught so truly some glimpse of the depth and beauty of his compassion that though we reject these narratives as history, we treasure them as full of the truth. The writers, like artists who work in other media, have seen beyond the obvious facts to the eternal meaning of his love, as did a Portuguese storyteller of the last century:

In those days Jesus had not yet departed from Galilee and the fair luminous margins of the lake of Tiberias; but there passed down the fresh valley a man, who announced that a new prophet, a handsome rabbi, was traversing the plains and villages of Galilee, foretelling the coming of the Kingdom of God, and curing all human ills.

Radiant like the dawn behind the mountains, the fame of Jesus of Galilee, consoling and full of divine promises, grew and increased. And all the while the fame of Jesus, the healer of lingering maladies, grew ever fresher and more consoling, like the afternoon breeze that blows from Hermon and revives and lifts the drooping lilies in the gardens.

Now between Enganim and Caesarea, in a wretched hut sunk

in the cleft of a hillock, there lived at this time a widow, the most miserable of all women in Israel. Her only son, a little boy crippled in every part, had passed from the lean breasts at which she had suckled him to the rags of a rotting mattress, where he had lain and starved and groaned now seven years.

One day a beggar entered the hut and told of the great hope of the afflicted, this rabbi who had appeared in Galilee, and of a loaf in a basket made seven, and how he loved all little children and dried all tears, and promised the poor a great and luminous kingdom of more abundance than the Court of Solomon. The woman listened with famished eyes.

And then in a murmur, weaker than the brush of a wing, her little son begged his mother to bring him this rabbi who loved even the poorest little children, and healed even the longest sicknesses. To which the mother, sobbing: "Child of mine, how can I leave thee? The roads of Galilee are long and the pity of men is short. None would give ear to my message, none would show me the dwellingplace of the sweet rabbi. And, my child, perhaps Jesus is dead. Heaven sent him. Heaven hath taken him away. And with him the hopes of the sorrowful have died forever."

The child raised his trembling little hands from out his dark rags and murmured: "Mother, I want to see Jesus." And immediately, opening the door slowly and smiling, Jesus said to the child:

"I am here."

### PART III. MEN OF ROME WRITE OF JESUS

If Jesus Christ is a man—  
And only a man—I say  
That of all mankind I cleave to him  
And to him will I cleave alway.

If Jesus Christ is a god—  
And the only God—I swear  
I will follow him through heaven and hell,  
The earth, the sea, and the air!

#### *A Roman Soldier Ponders a Past Experience*

IT MIGHT have been yesterday, so vivid is the experience even now. Yet it really happened back in the year 783 A.U.C. (anno urbis conditae). We are an old nation, we Romans, and proud of every year since the founding of our city, proud of the ways of our fathers. We have no use for the new and the strange. But that man on the cross!

There were only three crosses that day on Golgotha, Place-of-the-Skull. (The hill is shaped like that.) The crosses stood out sharp against the eastern sky. They fairly seemed to shout, "Rome must be obeyed!" Right, too. But only three crosses, that was not many. A few of the man's friends were there. Of course, the usual crowd of morbid curiosity seekers, laughing and jeering. And, *mirabile dictu*, some of the chief priests and their scribes! And they taunted him, too, "You saved others. Yourself you cannot save!"

How those Jews had haggled over the superscription, THE KING OF THE JEWS! There it was for all to read in Latin

and in Hebrew and in Greek. What a polyglot land! They wanted it to read that he said, I AM KING OF THE JEWS. But they had been silenced as Rome knows how to silence trouble makers. "What I have written, I have written." Those were Pilate's very words. For all his pomp and circumstance, Pilate secretly feared Rome, and could not yield a point.

But only three crosses. Not so many! When the Zealots revolted in Sepphoris, two decades before this crucifixion, our Roman garrison came hotfooted from Caesarea to re-enforce the local guard. There had been twenty-two hundred crucifixions that day. And then they fired the city. What a sight that was from the nearby hill of Nazareth—twenty-two hundred crosses silhouetted against the flames the whole night long! This young Nazarene who was condemned for insurrection must have seen that holocaust. Couldn't he learn anything? Stubborn folks, the Jews, hidebound—stupidly so! If a boy of ten could not learn, what hope for the others?

He was a strange visionary. There was something about him though, the way he ignored the taunts of his tormentors. He even refused the drugged wine which charitable matrons of Jerusalem furnished for the victims of crucifixion. He did not curse and rant like the others. He wanted a friend to look after his mother. In the midst of his agony he thought about her. Some people said that once he quoted a line from the temple hymnal. It sounded as though the whole thing were too much for him. Yet it was a hymn to his God that he quoted. One time he was thirsty there in the hot sun. What was that quaint tale of a bird that brought him water, and afterward the bird's breast was red? So many tales grow up!

But the truly amazing thing was those words that rang out,

Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing.

Unbelievable! His friends said that he used to talk about loving your enemies. But in an hour of torture—a prayer like



that! And he called his God, Father. His words grew fainter,

Father, to thy hands I entrust my spirit.

And then he died. There had been those strange dark hours from midday on. Out of the surrounding blackness his words, "Father, forgive them," had blazed like a great white light. They still glow after all these years. They echo like the unending surge of the sea. Crucified men often live two or three days, but he died before sunset. They had him down from the cross and buried in a new tomb before the Jewish Sabbath began. Even our centurion was greatly impressed.

Strange fellow! "Father, forgive them." How the words haunt you—you'd think he was still alive!

## *Three Romans Mention Jesus*

This name [Christians] came from one Christus, who was put to death in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate.

—Cornelius Tacitus

Claudius banished from Rome all the Jews, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrestus.

—Caius Suetonius Tranquillus

They met together on an appointed day, before the light came, and sang antiphonally to Christ, as to a god.

—Caius Plinius Caecilius Secundus

NOR all the followers of Jesus, "who had been scattered by the trouble which arose over Stephen, made their way as far as Antioch." Nor can we think of the others as all tarrying overlong in Cyprus or Phoenicia. "Westward, ho!" was the unceasing song of the sounding sea, as the combing breakers dashed upon the shores of the eastern Mediterranean. To many a humble craftsman or influential trader "Westward, ho" meant Rome. The beginnings of the church in Rome are lost in the mists of the seemingly unimportant which conceal so much of the early history of Christianity.

When Paul sent to the Romans, sometime between A.D. 54 and 58, a letter in which he set forth his conception of salvation in Christ Jesus, he added a personal postscript voicing his deep appreciation of the Christians there, whom he knew only by report, as having "ample goodness of heart, filled with knowledge of every kind, and well able to give advice to one another." Then he explains his plans for visiting them:

I have wanted to visit you for years now, whenever I should go to Spain. I am hoping to see you as I pass through Rome, and after the joy of tarrying with you for a time, to have you speed me on my way. But just now I am about to leave for Jerusalem.

Thither he went, not without misgivings, to carry the contributions made by the Greeks and Macedonians for the relief of the poor of the Judean church. When he finally made his perilous journey to Rome it was not as a traveler en route to Spain, but as a prisoner appealing his case to the tribunal of Caesar.

The members of the growing church in Rome included both men of culture and those of little opportunity. Some were Jews and more were drawn from the vast pagan population. Whatever their native tongue, they all spoke Greek and read together the Jewish Scriptures in the Greek translation, the Septuagint. They held their meetings secretly, as any newly formed religious group in Rome must do. They spread their faith from person to person by the spoken word, and even more by the quality of their lives, radiant with a new hope, a new joy, the fruits of a new spirit, a "new and deeper kindness, like a star rising in the darkness, a fountain gushing in the sunlight." But in the teeming life of the great city they were a tiny handful of people. And the life of Rome was as yet little affected by their presence.

From the days of the Emperor Augustus (31 B.C.—A.D. 14), save for border campaigns against the Germanic tribes on the northern boundaries of the Empire, the whole world had been at peace. True, peace in those days meant gaunt hunger, haunting fear, slave labor for vast multitudes not numbered among the favored ones, the Roman citizens. Yet for the Romans it was a good time in which to be alive.

After his great naval victory at Actium 31 B.C. when he defeated the fleets of Cleopatra and Mark Anthony, the Emperor Augustus consolidated his far-flung empire, reorganized

the provincial governments, expanded the vast network of Roman roads, made travel by sea as safe as wind and wave would permit. His huge triremes brought food from the rich granaries of Egypt for distribution of the dole to upward of three hundred thousand persons in Rome. Not even the excesses of the emperors who followed him could wholly undo his work. With the reign of Vespasian (A.D. 69–79) and his able successors there followed another hundred years of peace.

These two centuries of peace saw Roman literature rise to its zenith—Virgil, Horace, Ovid among the poets; Tacitus and Suetonius, the historians; Pliny, the naturalist; Seneca from Spain and Marcus Aurelius, the philosophers. Surely some of these famous Latin writers must have had something to say of the young Jew of Nazareth whose followers were increasing not only in Rome but even in the remote provinces. The question keeps reappearing, “What do we know about Jesus from contemporary sources outside the Christian circles?” It is fascinating to explore the scant records which have survived.

Late in the first century and in the early years of the second, there lived in Rome three friends outstanding alike for their literary work and for the place which each occupied in the public life of the empire—the historians, Cornelius Tacitus and Caius Suetonius Tranquillus, and their friend Caius Plinius Caecilius Secundus, known today as Pliny the Younger, to distinguish him from his famous uncle, the naturalist. In the midst of great corruption in high places, these three men represent the flowering of the best in Roman tradition.

Much of what we know about them personally we learn from the letters of Pliny. Over the years he published ten rolls of his correspondence, a priceless revelation of some of the finest people of his time. He was a great admirer of Tacitus, who was several years his senior. “You are the master, I the disciple,” he once wrote. The two friends used to send

their manuscripts back and forth for reading and criticism before completing them for publication. Pliny's words to Tacitus,

My poems, which you suppose are being brought to such a pitch of perfection amid the silence and solemnity of woods and groves are, really, quite at a stand.

might have been written any yesterday from one friend to another.

Pliny's affection for Suetonius was deep and steadfast. He once wrote the Emperor Trajan, his friend and patron,

Suetonius Tranquillus, Sir, is a most excellent, honorable, and learned man. I was so pleased with his tastes and disposition that I have long since invited him into my family, as my constant guest and domestic friend; and my affection increased for him the more I knew of him.

It was Pliny who urged Suetonius to publish his poems, commenting, "Your work has already reached that degree of perfection that the file can only weaken, not polish it."

Suetonius was not so gifted or discriminating a writer as Tacitus. His *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* tends to be either anecdotes or cataloguing of slightly related data. Tacitus is recognized as the greatest historian that Rome ever produced. He was a rare judge of character. One has but to read his *Annals* to realize his warm human sympathy and his extraordinary ability in portraying events with startling vividness. He was only a boy of nine or ten when Rome was burned in A.D. 64. One wonders if he saw anything of the conflagration. His brief statement about Jesus is embedded in his account of this terrible fire:

Now came a calamitous fire—whether it was accidental or purposely contrived by the Emperor, remains uncertain: for on this point authorities are divided—more violent and destructive than any that ever befell our city. . . . Furiously the destroying flames swept on, first over the level ground, then up

the heights, then again plunging into the hollows, with a rapidity which outstripped all efforts to cope with them, the ancient city lending itself to their progress by its narrow, tortuous streets and its misshapen blocks of buildings. The shrieks of panic-stricken women; the weakness of the aged and the helplessness of the young; the efforts of some to save themselves, of others to help their neighbors, the hurrying of those who dragged their sick along, the lingering of those who waited for them—all made up a scene of inextricable confusion. . . .

At this moment Nero was at Actium. He did not return to the city until the flames were approaching the mansion which he had built to connect the Palatine with the gardens of Maecenas; nor could they be stopped until the whole Palatine, including the palace and everything around it had been consumed.

Nero assigned the Campus Martius and the Agrippa monuments for the relief of the fugitive and houseless multitude. He threw open his own gardens, also, and put up temporary buildings for the accommodations of the destitute; he brought up provisions from Ostia and the neighboring towns; and he reduced the price of wheat to three sesterces the peck. But popular as these measures were, they aroused no gratitude; for a rumor had gone abroad that at the moment when the city was in flames Nero had mounted upon a stage in his own house, and by way of likening modern calamities to ancient, had sung the tale of the sack of Troy.

Tacitus describes in detail the extent of the destruction, the rebuilding of the devastated areas, including a new palace for Nero himself, the lengthy ceremonies for propitiating the gods, and then continues:

Neither human aid, nor imperial bounty, nor atoning-offerings to the Gods, could remove the sinister suspicion that the fire had been brought about by Nero's order. To put an end therefore to this rumor, he shifted the charge on to others, and inflicted the most cruel tortures upon a body of men detested for their abominations, and popularly known by the name of Christians. This name came from one Christus, who was put to death in the reign of Tiberius by the Procurator Pontius Pilate: but though checked for the time, the detestable super-

stition broke out again, not in Judaea only, where the mischief began, but even in Rome, where every horrible and shameful iniquity, from every quarter of the world, pours in and finds a welcome. . . . But guilty as these men were and worthy of direst punishment, the fact that they were being sacrificed for no public good, but only to glut the cruelty of one man, aroused a feeling of pity on their behalf.

In reading Suetonius' account of this fire, the difference between his writing and that of Tacitus stands out clearly. Suetonius lacks the careful, judicial ways of Tacitus, never questions Nero's responsibility for the fire, and makes no mention of the Christians at this point:

Nero spared neither the people of Rome nor the capital of his country. Somebody in conversation saying to him (in Greek),

"When I am dead, let fire devour the world."

"Nay," said he, "let it be while I am living."

And he acted accordingly for, pretending to be disgusted with the old buildings and the narrow and winding streets, he set the city on fire so openly that many of consular rank caught Nero's own household servants on their property with tow and torches in their hands, but durst not meddle with them. . . . During six days and seven nights the terrible devastation continued. . . . This fire Nero beheld from a tower in the house of Maecenas and "being greatly delighted," as he said, "with the beautiful effect of the conflagration," he sang a poem on the ruin of Troy, in the tragic dress he used on the stage.

It is as Suetonius is cataloguing certain reforms in the early years of the reign of Nero that he refers to the Christians. The passage is doubly interesting when quoted in context:

Many severe regulations and new orders were made in his time. . . . Public suppers were limited to the public entertainments where food was distributed; food houses were restrained from selling any prepared foods except pulse and herbs, whereas before they sold all kinds of meat. He likewise inflicted severe punishments on the Christians, a sort of people

who held a new and impious superstition. He forbade the revels of the charioteers, who had long assumed a license to stroll about, and established themselves a kind of prescriptive right to cheat and thief, making a jest of it. . . .

The only reference which Suetonius makes to Jesus himself occurs in his life of Claudius:

He banished from Rome all the Jews who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrestus.

Swift as thought comes the memory of those old friends of ours, Aquila and Priscilla, the tentmakers with whom Paul lodged in Corinth:

Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome.

Suetonius knew nothing of the belief of these Jews that God had sent his Anointed One, Christus. He confused the name with a familiar Latin and Greek name Chrestus, meaning The-One-Needed, hence, The Good, sometimes in derision, The-Goody-Goody! So little did Suetonius really know about this "Chrestus" that he even thought of him as in Rome. Certainly his followers spoke of him as there.

It was in the roll of his correspondence with his great friend the Emperor Trajan that Pliny made his one slight reference to Jesus. In the year A.D. 111 or 112, Trajan appointed Pliny governor of Bithynia and Pontus on the Black Sea, and thither he went with his beloved wife, Calpurnia. When he first assumed office he set to work to straighten out the tangled finances of the province, and later came to grips with its social and religious problems.

The Romans had a passion for the ordered ways of life, even at the sacrifice of a profounder justice. They were keenly alive to the values of religious practices in helping to



unify a people, and whatever freedom of worship they gave to old and long-established cults—except for special privilege granted to the Jews—they insisted on worship of the Emperor. To refuse was not only impious; it laid one open to the charge of treason as well. Pliny found the temples deserted, the sacred rites neglected, and the purchasers for sacrificial victims few. He also found a growing group of Christians. Some of these people, brought before him for trial, denied that they were Christians or ever had been. In proof of this, so Pliny writes to Trajan,

they repeated after me an invocation to the gods and offered religious rites with wine and incense before your statue (which for that purpose I had ordered to be brought, together with those of the gods), and they even reviled the name of Christ: whereas there is no forcing, it is said, those who are really Christians into any of these compliances: I thought it proper, therefore, to discharge them.

Others who were brought to trial admitted that they had at some time in the past been Christians, but had now renounced the error:

They affirmed the whole of their guilt, or their error, was that they met on a stated day before it was light and addressed a form of prayer to Christ, as to a divinity, binding themselves by a solemn oath, not for the purposes of any wicked design but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate and then reassemble, to eat in common a harmless meal.

Pliny was not satisfied with this testimony and so, still seeking to get to the root of the matter, he put

two female slaves to the torture, who were said to officiate in their religious rites: But all I could discover was evidence of an absurd and extravagant superstition. . . . This contagious

superstition is not confined to the cities only but has spread its infection among the neighboring villages and country.

Pliny assured Trajan that he still hoped to be able to win all the people back to the worship of the gods. Trajan's reply was one of commendation:

You have adopted the right course, my dearest Secundus, in investigating the charges against the Christians.

After two years in Bithynia, Pliny's correspondence with Trajan ceases, nor do we know anything more of his experiences with the Christians. Whether he died on the shores of the Black Sea or returned to his friends in Rome is a fact shrouded in the clouds of a forgotten or unrecorded past.

Three Romans of influence and ability, Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny—and this is all that they have to tell us of Jesus and his followers. Nor do any of the works of their compatriots which have escaped the ravages of time so much as mention Jesus. Yet one amazing fact stands clear—his influence had spread in one brief century not only from Judea to Rome, but even to the rural districts of far-off Bithynia and Pontus.

What other contemporary records remain?

## *A Jew Comments, and a Samaritan*

This man who fills your days and haunts your nights is repellent to me. Yet you would tire my ears with His sayings and my mind with His deeds.

I am weary of His words and all that He did. His very name offends me, and the name of His countryside. I will none of Him.

What word did Jesus utter that Halliel had not spoken? What wisdom did He reveal that was not of Gamaliel? What are His lisps to the voice of Philo? What cymbals did He beat that were not beaten ere ever He lived?

What man shall speak since Isaiah has spoken? Who dares sing since David? And shall wisdom be born now, after Solomon has been gathered to his fathers?

And what of our prophets, whose tongues were swords and their lips flames?

Left they a straw behind for this gleaner of Galilee? Or a fallen fruit for the beggar of the North Country? There was nought for Him save to break the loaf already baked by our ancestors, and to pour the wine which their holy feet had already pressed from the grapes of old.

Who is this Jesus of Nazareth, and what is He?

I beg you, charge not my ears with His words or His deeds. My heart is overfull with the prophets of old, and that is enough.

THESE words which the poet puts on the lips of his imagined Jephtha of Caesarea might well have been the words of many a Jew before the close of the first century, for out of the long controversy which had raged amongst them, the Christians had emerged as a separate religious group in the Roman Empire. Yet both Jews and Christians were victims of the fierce persecutions which broke out in the early nineties under Domitian, ostensibly because both groups re-

fused to worship the Emperor. The renowned Jewish writer, Flavius Josephus, had written *The Jewish War* and had recently completed *The Antiquities of the Jews*. During the persecutions Josephus wrote his two rolls, *Against Apion*, in defense of the Jews, and Luke wrote his two rolls, *Luke-Acts* in defense of the Christians.

Joseph ben-Matthias, whom we know by his Latinized name Josephus, was born in Jerusalem of a priestly family in A.D. 37. When the precocious lad was nineteen years old he had already experimented with the three contemporary expressions of Judaism. He had tried being a Sadducee, a Pharisee and an Essene. He had spent two years with a hermit in the desert, and came out of his seclusion a devout Pharisee. Shortly after the burning of Rome, he went hither on a political mission to secure the release of three aged Jews, whom many believed innocent of the crime for which they had been imprisoned. Through a friend of his, a Jewish actor, he was presented to the Empress Poppaea, who influenced the Emperor in his favor.

Returning home he pleaded in vain with his fellow countrymen not to defy Rome, yet was himself finally dragged into the great rebellion of A.D. 66. He was governor of Galilee when his Jewish troops deserted him and he was brought before Vespasian, who was conducting a campaign in Palestine with his son Titus. Josephus, with his usual political astuteness, announced to Vespasian that he would one day be Emperor of Rome. When that prophecy was realized in A.D. 69 Vespasian gave Josephus Roman citizenship and, as a signal mark of honor, conferred upon him his family name of Flavius. After the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 Flavius Josephus settled permanently in Rome.

In his *Antiquities* Josephus twice mentions Jesus, once only in passing, in reporting an illegal act of a certain Annas who persuaded the Sanhedrin to condemn to stoning

the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ, James was his name.

Strangely enough, the other and longer passage is found only in manuscripts of the *Antiquities* where obvious additions have been made by Christian copyists, apparently late in the third century. Origen, writing before that time, was unacquainted with the paragraph quoted below, for he marveled that Josephus spoke of Jesus only as the "so-called Christ." Eusebius, the great church historian whose book was published in A.D. 326, quotes this reference as it is found in all extant manuscripts of Josephus, none of them earlier than the eleventh century. In the present printing, the unquestioned interpolations are enclosed in parentheses:

About this time there arose a wise man, named Jesus (if it is correct to call him a man). He was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of those who welcome the truth with delight. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. (He was the Christ.) When Pilate on the evidence of the principal men among us, sentenced him to the cross, those who loved him at the first did not cease to love him. (For he appeared to them alive on the third day, even as the divine prophets had declared this and ten thousand other marvelous things about him.) And the race of the Christians, so named from him, are not extinct even now.

Josephus must have been familiar with some of the teachings of Jesus and must have appreciated his high ethical ideals else he would not have classed him with the wise men of his people, the writers of Proverbs and Job and Ecclesiasticus. But beyond this fact we learn nothing new about Jesus.

One other slight fragment comes down to us from the first century after the crucifixion. It is a single sentence which the soldier, traveler and writer, Julius Africanus, who wrote his *Chronography* in A.D. 221 quoted from a certain Thallus, a Samaritan, who wrote in Rome about the middle of the first century. Africanus writes,

Thallus, in the third book of his history, calls this darkness an eclipse of the sun, but in my opinion he is wrong.

This sentence, quite unintelligible without the Gospel record, would suggest that Thallus explained the darkness at the time of the crucifixion, as did some of the early Christians, as an eclipse of the sun. So the Passion narrative incorporated in Luke's Gospel describes it. The writings of Africanus have come down to us in such fragmentary form that we cannot tell whether he had observed that an eclipse of the sun can take place only at new moon, whereas Jesus was crucified around Passover time, at the season of full moon, or whether he had quite other reasons for discarding the statement of Thallus. That we may never know, but once again we are awakened to fresh appreciation of the stark simplicity of Mark's narrative of the Passion.

With so slight a knowledge of Jesus to be gained from these non-Christian sources, we turn again to those priceless records which the early followers of Jesus shared with their friends.

## PART IV. THE GOSPELS ARE WRITTEN

Light looked down and beheld Darkness,  
"Thither will I go," said Light.  
Peace looked down and beheld War,  
"Thither will I go," said Peace.  
Love looked down and beheld Hatred,  
"Thither will I go," said Love.  
So came Light, and shone;  
So came Peace, and gave rest;  
So came Love, and brought Life;  
And the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us.

### *Papias of Hierapolis*

It was after the reign of Trajan that Papias of Hierapolis and Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, became distinguished.

**E**VEN while some of the Greek Christians were writing down the words and deeds of Jesus, and later these records were serving as sources for our Gospels, there were other Christians who clung to the ways of the past, and treasured the spoken word as of far greater worth than anything that could be learned from written sources. As late as the first half of the second century Papias shared this conservative point of view, "for," wrote he, "I thought that nothing from books would benefit me as much as what came from the living and abiding voice." Yet, interestingly enough, he became the author of one of those "less profitable books," entitled *Interpretations of the Sacred Utterances of the Lord*.

There is evidence that copies of his manuscript were still

extant in convent libraries in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, but all that we have today are certain fragments, not too clear in their meaning, since they were preserved out of context by one or another of the Church Fathers. Yet they are the earliest statements which we have about the writing of our Gospels, and it is a matter of unfailing interest to read what Papias considered significant.

Of the man himself we know very little. He was a younger contemporary of Ignatius, third Bishop of Antioch, and Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna. Papias was himself Bishop of Hierapolis, a city in Phrygia, somewhat over a hundred miles east of Smyrna. Irenaeus, who was born in Smyrna and who late in the century became Bishop of Lyons, was a disciple and great admirer of Papias. Most of us who know Papias at all have heard of him only in connection with the writings of Matthew and of Mark, but it so happens that he was one of those who still looked for the early return of Jesus and treasured the hope "that the kingdom of Christ would be set up in material form on this earth." He certainly let his imagination run riot as he pictured the marvels of nature that should come to pass in that day! It is from Irenaeus, who shared this belief, that we learn of this aspect of the faith of Papias:

The blessing thus foretold belongs undoubtedly to the times of the Kingdom, when the righteous shall rise from the dead and reign, when, too, creation renewed and freed from bondage shall produce a wealth of food of all kinds from the dew of heaven and from the fatness of the earth; as the elders, who saw John the disciple of the Lord, relate that they had heard from him, how the Lord used to teach concerning those times, and to say,

The days will come, in which vines shall grow, each having ten thousand shoots, and on each shoot ten thousand branches, and on each branch again ten thousand twigs, and on each twig ten thousand clusters, and on each cluster ten thousand grapes, and each grape when pressed shall yield five-and-twenty measures of wine. And when any of the



saints shall have taken hold of one of their clusters, another shall cry, I am a better cluster; take me, bless the Lord through me. Likewise also a grain of wheat shall produce ten thousand heads, and every head shall have ten thousand grains, and every grain ten pounds of fine flour, bright and clean, and the other fruits, seeds and grass shall produce in similar proportions, and all the animals, using these fruits which are products of the soil, shall become in their turn peaceable and harmonious, obedient to man in all subjection.

These things Papias, who was a hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp, an ancient worthy, witnesseth in writing in the fourth of his books, for there are five books composed by him.

It is to Eusebius, that great church historian of the fourth century, that we owe the fragments from Papias about the writing of Mark and of Matthew. In his day the five books of *Interpretations of the Sacred Utterances of the Lord* were well known, and Eusebius quotes only such sections as serve his immediate purpose:

Papias himself, in the preface to his discourses, certainly does not declare that he himself was a hearer and eyewitness of the holy Apostles, but he shows, by the language which he uses, that he has received the matters of the faith from those who were their friends:

I shall not hesitate to arrange for you along with my own Interpretation all that I learned from the elders and remembered with scrupulous accuracy, asserting emphatically the truth of what I record. I did not, as many do, find pleasure in those who were great talkers but in those who spoke the truth. If ever anyone who had accompanied the elders came, I questioned him as to the words of the elders, what Andrew or Peter had said, what Philip or Thomas or James, what John or Matthew or any of the others of the Lord's disciples had said; what Aristion or John the Elder, who are the Lord's disciples, talk about. For I thought that nothing from books would benefit me as much as what came from the living and abiding voice.

Eusebius comments at some length upon this passage, calling particular attention to the mention of two Johns, and to the fact that Papias claims to have heard only John the Elder. He continues:

For our present purpose we will merely add to his words which have been quoted above, a tradition which has been set forth through these sources concerning Mark who wrote the Gospel:

This is what the Elder used to say: Mark, who became Peter's interpreter, wrote down accurately, though with no certainty as to order, everything he remembered of what was said and done by Christ. For he did not hear the Lord, nor did he accompany him but later, as I have said, he went with Peter, who used to fit his teachings to the needs of the hour, but made no attempt to give an ordered report of the Lord's words. It therefore follows that Mark made no mistake in writing down certain things exactly as he recalled them. For his one purpose was to omit nothing that he had heard and to make no false statement concerning any of those matters.

Something of the way in which many words befog the sense is readily appreciated when we recognize that the words of the Elder end with the first sentence, and all that follows is Papias' attempt to make clear his meaning! Yet the one short sentence which Eusebius quotes from Papias about Matthew is not clear to us either!

So then Matthew compiled the sacred utterances in Aramaic, but everyone translated them as he was able.

Papias apparently used as the primary sources for his "Interpretations" Mark's Gospel, which he accurately describes as containing what Jesus said and did, and the "Sacred Utterances" compiled by Matthew in Aramaic. With meticulous care he speaks of Matthew not as *writing* but as *compiling*, as for oral transmission, the *sacred utterances*. This is not just

the *words* of the Lord as in Mark. It is the term used among the Greeks when referring to the *utterances*, the *oracles* given at Delphi and similar shrines. Among the Jews the word was used for inspired *utterances* from their Scriptures, especially the ten *utterances* of Moses from Mount Sinai. It was very simple, in a bilingual city like Antioch, for a preacher or teacher to use an oral compilation of the utterances of Jesus in Aramaic, translating freely when he was speaking to a group in Greek. It was a different matter in a city as predominantly Greek as Hierapolis. No wonder that Papias said they translated "as they were able"!

Meticulous certainly, and even petty-minded though he may have been, yet the influence of Papias was very great, not only on his immediate followers like Irenaeus who, Smyrna-born, later became Bishop of Lyons, but on writers of succeeding generations as well. Despite the fact that most of what he wrote has been lost like many other treasures of the early church, enough remains for us to catch something of the devotion of this bishop of the long ago, who sought out the best that he could glean from men of old for his Phrygian flock. We turn from him to search, as he did, for greater understanding of Jesus.

## *Domine Quo Vadis?*

Darkening the azure roof of Nero's world,  
From smoldering Rome the smoke of ruin curled;  
And the fierce populace went clamoring—  
"These Christian dogs, 'tis they have done this thing!"  
So to the wild wolf Hate were sacrificed  
The panting, huddled flock whose crime was Christ.

Now Peter lodged in Rome and rose each morn  
Looking to be ere night in sunder torn  
By those blind hands that with inebriate zeal  
Burned the strong saints, or broke them on the wheel,  
Or flung them to the lions to make mirth  
For dames that ruled the lords that ruled the earth.

And unto him, their towering rocky hold,  
Repaired those sheep of the Good Shepherd's fold  
In whose white fleece as yet no blood or foam  
Bore witness to the ravening fangs of Rome.  
"More light, more cheap," they cried, "we hold our lives  
Than chaff the flail or dust the whirlwind drives:  
As chaff they are winnowed and as dust are blown;  
Nay, they are nought; but priceless is thine own.  
Not in yon streaming shambles must thou die;  
We counsel, we entreat, we charge thee, fly!"  
And Peter answered: "Nay, my place is here;  
Through the dread storm, this ship of Christ I steer.  
Blind is the tempest, deaf the roaring tide,  
And I, His pilot, at the helm abide." . . .

"Yet, if He wills it . . . Nay, my task is plain,  
To serve, and to endure, and to remain.  
But weak I stand, and I beseech you all  
Urge me no more, lest at a touch I fall." . . .

And as a leaf when summer is o'erpast  
Hangs trembling ere it fall in some chance blast,

So hung his trembling purpose and fell dead;  
And he arose and hurried forth and fled,  
Darkness conniving, through the Capuan gate,  
From all that heaven of love, that hell of hate,  
To the Campania glimmering wide and still,  
And strove to think he did his Master's will. . . .

Lo, on the darkness brake a wandering ray:  
A vision flashed along the Appian Way,  
Divinely in the pagan night it shone—  
A mournful Face—a Figure hurrying on—  
Though haggard and disheveled, frail and worn,  
A King of David's lineage, crowned with thorn.  
"Lord, whither farest?" Peter, wondering, cried.  
"To Rome," said Christ, "to be recrucified."

Into the night the vision ebbed like breath;  
And Peter turned, and rushed on Rome and death.

**W**E WHO live in the midst of a world-shaking revolution where a conflict of ideas is raging to the death, are by the very nature of this conflict sensitized afresh to the inevitability of struggle when any considerable group of people hold ideas differing from the accepted social ways or go counter to the established customs. In the first years after the death of Jesus, so many of his followers were Jews that this very fact gave to all Christians the status of a Jewish sect before the Roman law. But within the group itself the conflict had to do with the Christian emphasis on inner values as opposed to the Jewish insistence on conformity to the ancient Law. Must all Christians conform to the Jewish way of life? One of the outstanding contributions of Paul was his clear-sighted recognition of new experience in Christ, set forth with great persuasiveness to his friends in Galatia:

O senseless Galatians, who has bewitched you—you who had Jesus Christ the crucified placarded before your very eyes? I simply want to ask you one thing: did you receive the Spirit by doing what the Law commands or by believing the gospel

message? Are you such fools? Did you begin with the Spirit only to end now with the flesh?

The Law thus held us as wards in discipline, till such time as Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. But faith has come and we are wards no longer; you are all sons of God by your faith in Christ Jesus. . . . There is no room for Jew or Greek, there is no room for slave or freeman, there is no room for male and female; you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Ultimately the hard-won freedom from the restrictions of the Jewish Law carried its own price. The Christians began to be clearly differentiated from their Jewish brethren and now, as a new cult, had no status before the Roman law. This fact had its repercussions here and there in isolated cases, but it was the great fire in Rome which proved the occasion when the whole group of Christians in that city were tested to the uttermost.

With Roman thoroughness Nero set about making a spectacle of the Christians:

First those who acknowledged themselves of this persuasion were arrested; and upon their testimony a vast number were condemned, not so much on the charge of incendiarism as for their hatred of the human race. Their death was turned into a diversion. They were clothed in the skins of wild beasts, and torn to pieces by dogs; they were fastened to crosses, or set up to be burned, so as to serve the purpose of lamps when daylight failed. Nero gave up his own gardens for this spectacle.

Even Tacitus, much as he despised these Christians for their base superstitions—how easy it is to condemn that of which we know nothing—could not refrain from adding a word of pity for their suffering:

But guilty as these men were and worthy of direst punishment, the fact that they were being sacrificed for no public good, but only to glut the cruelty of one man, aroused a feeling of pity in their behalf.

Tacitus knew nothing of Paul of Tarsus or Peter of Galilee.

Nor have we any contemporary record of what befell them at this time. But early in the life of the Church we find the belief already accepted that both of them perished under this wild orgy of vindictiveness.

*The Acts of Paul*, a book produced about the middle of the second century, contains our first written account of Paul's death. The description of the martyrdom is quite evidently a romantic tale which grew and expanded as it was told and retold. Yet there are certain suggestive statements, in the midst of much fantasy, which may well have a basis in fact: the accusation based on the claim of Christ's kingship; the fact of Paul's being beheaded because he was a Roman citizen; the persistent memory of that terrible trial by fire.

The chapters on the martyrdom recount the fact that Patroclus, the cupbearer of Caesar, bears witness to "Christ Jesus, the king of the ages."

He overthroweth all kingdoms and he alone shall be forever, and there shall be no kingdom that shall escape him.

Then Nero commanded

the soldiers of the great king to be sought out and set forth a decree to the effect that all who were found to be Christians and soldiers of Christ should be slain. And among many others Paul also was brought, bound. . . . Caesar commanded all the prisoners to be burned with fire, but Paul to be beheaded after the law of the Romans.

Then Paul stood with his face to the east and lifted up his hands unto heaven and prayed a long time, and in his prayer he conversed in the Hebrew tongue with the fathers, and then stretched out his neck without speaking. . . . The executioner struck off his head.

Paul came about the ninth hour, when many philosophers and the centurion were standing with Caesar, and stood before them all, and said: Caesar, behold, I, Paul the soldier of God, am not dead but live in my God. But unto thee shall many evils befall and great punishment, thou wretched man, because thou hast shed unjustly the blood of the righteous. And having so said Paul departed from him.

The earliest written record of the martyrdom of Peter comes from the end of the second century in a book known as *The Acts of Peter*. *Domine, quo vadis* is so familiar to us out of context that it may be of interest to read it from this early Christian document.

Now Peter was in Rome rejoicing in the Lord with the brethren, and giving thanks night and day for the multitude that were brought daily unto the holy name by the grace of the Lord.

Word reached Peter of a plan to arrest him. Marcellus and the rest of the brethren begged him to depart from Rome.

But Peter said unto them: shall we be runaways, brethren? and they said to him: Nay, but that thou mayest yet be able to serve the Lord. And he obeyed the brethren's voice and went forth alone, saying: Let none of you come forth with me, but I will go forth alone, having changed the fashion of mine apparel. And as he went forth of the city, he saw the Lord entering into Rome. And when he saw him, he said: Lord, whither goest thou thus? And the Lord said unto him: I go into Rome to be crucified. And Peter said unto him: Lord, art thou being crucified again? He said unto him: Yea, Peter, I am being crucified again. And Peter came to himself: and having beheld the Lord ascending up into heaven, he returned to Rome, rejoicing and glorifying the Lord.

Peter was arrested and condemned "to be crucified on the accusation of godlessness." And Peter requested the executioners: "Crucify me thus, with the head downward and not otherwise." When they had hanged him after the manner that he desired, he offered a long prayer, through which one catches far-off echoes of the Gospels:

O Jesu Christ, the spirit that is in me loveth thee, speaketh unto thee, seeth thee, and beseecheth thee. . . . Thou art my father, thou my mother, thou my brother, thou my friend. . . . Thou art God alone, and none other: to whom be glory now



and unto all the ages. *Amen*. . . . With the *Amen* Peter gave up his spirit unto the Lord.

But Peter by night appeared unto Marcellus. . . . And Marcellus awoke and told the brethren of the appearing of Peter: and he was with them that had been stablished in the faith of Christ by Peter.

Another Christian added what he thought to be a fitting conclusion to these Apocryphal Acts of Peter:

Nero sought to destroy all them that had been made disciples by Peter. And he beheld by night one that scourged him and said unto him: Nero, thou canst not now persecute nor destroy the servants of Christ: refrain therefore thine hands from them. And so Nero, being greatly affrighted by such a vision, abstained from harming the disciples at that time when Peter also departed this life.

And thenceforth the brethren were rejoicing with one mind and exulting in the Lord, glorifying the God and Savior of our Lord Jesus Christ with the Holy Ghost, unto whom be glory, world without end, *Amen*.

The word *apocryphal* meant originally something so sacred and *secret* that it was to be shared only with the initiated. But the fact that many of the Apocryphal Gospels and Acts, written in the second and succeeding centuries, were credited to one or another of the disciples in order to get them a better hearing, resulted in the word's coming to mean by the time of Jerome, *spurious*, *false*.

The probability is that Peter and Paul died in Rome about A.D. 64. The loss of these two leaders, along with the martyrdom of such a multitude of other Christians, would be a crushing blow to the Christian community, and sooner or later, out of the anguish of this experience, something creatively significant might arise. Mark's Gospel is the new creation.

## *The Gospel for the Romans*

After the deaths of Peter and Paul, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself also handed down to us in writing the things which Peter had proclaimed.

THE Christians in Rome had known catastrophe after catastrophe. They had been bereft of their great leaders, Peter and Paul. Many of them had lost their humble homes and all their possessions in the fire that had devastated the city. All of them had lost dear friends in the holocaust in Nero's gardens. And now those who had known Jerusalem were doubly stricken, for it was already a doomed city whose fall beneath the battering-rams of Titus was inevitable. And any of their fellow Christians who had not already escaped to Pella would surely suffer the fate of Roman captives of war.

All those Christians in the city of the seven hills lived continually beneath the shadow of impending tragedy. Fear had gripped their hearts even when they would be courageous. There was a word from James, "If any one of you is in trouble, he should pray." They had prayed fervently to the "Father of mercies and God of all comfort," even as Paul had taught. And every First Day while it was yet dark, they made their way to a secret place of meeting, and there once again found comfort as they ate the bread and drank the cup "proclaiming the Lord's death till his coming."

*Amen: Come, Lord Jesus,*

they prayed.

One First Day, before the bread was broken, their preacher had told them again how Jesus fed the multitude. He and

his disciples had sailed across the lake to a solitary place for rest. But the people had hastened around by land, and were there before them:

When he got out of the boat, he found a great crowd gathered, and his heart was touched at the sight of them, because they were like sheep that have no shepherd; and he proceeded to teach them a great deal. When it grew late his disciples came to him and said,

"This is a lonely place and it is getting late. Send the people off to the farms and villages around to buy themselves something to eat."

But he answered,

"Give them food yourselves."

They said to him,

"Can we go and buy forty dollars' worth of bread and give it to them to eat?"

But he said to them,

"How many loaves have you? Go and see."

They looked and told him,

"Five, and two fish."

And he directed them all to sit down in parties on the fresh grass. And they threw themselves down in groups, in hundreds and in fifties. Then he took the five loaves and the two fish and looked up to heaven and blessed the loaves and broke them in pieces and gave them to the disciples to pass to the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. And they all ate and had enough. And the pieces they gathered up filled twelve baskets, besides the pieces of the fish. There were five thousand men that ate the loaves.

Could it have been, as he listened to the recital of this tale, ere they celebrated their common meal, remembering Jesus, that Mark saw his own purpose clear? Truly the Roman Christians were like scattered sheep with no shepherd. Yet Jesus still delayed his coming. No man knew when he would walk once more among them. How could they hold him in remembrance when so many who had known him in Galilee had already fallen asleep? It was not enough to recall this

incident and that parable, not enough even to think on him "crucified and slain." They must all see him once more,

... as in the village street,  
In the house or harvest field,  
Halt and lame and blind he healed,  
When he walked in Galilee.

Yes, they must see him as a man of power, of poise, of purpose—the tragedy of Golgotha transformed to triumph. A tremendous sense of urgency came upon Mark. More than forty times in his brief volume he wrote, *straightway, immediately*. Yet a swift reading of the book reveals, save for one or two intimate moments, an amazingly objective narrative. It is the more profoundly moving because its author so completely obliterates himself. One tiny episode in the Garden of Gethsemane may be the author's signature. Or it may be the experience of some Christian known to the Roman church as were Alexander and Rufus the sons of Simon of Cyrene, else why mention them at all?

Then all the disciples left Jesus and made their escape. And a young man followed him with nothing but a linen cloth about his body; and they seized him, but he left the cloth behind and ran away naked.

This first Gospel is not a biography of Jesus, nor are any of the long line of its successors, canonical or apocryphal. Probably Mark did not have the makings of a biography or even of memoirs such as Xenophon's *Memorabilia of Socrates*. What he had as materials out of which to build his priceless record was first of all a narrative of the Passion, probably very much as he used it in his book. He had certain vivid incidents about Peter, as Papias well knew. He had a collection of stories of controversy between Jesus and the Pharisees, probably some of them already built together as he incorporated them, from the healing of the paralytic to the healing

of the man with a withered hand. He had some compilation of Sayings of Jesus from which he drew certain parables. He refers again and again to Jesus as a teacher, as though the Roman Christians were already quite familiar with his teachings. He had a large number of unrelated incidents which had been told and retold from Jerusalem to Antioch and on to Rome. Many an unnamed Christian had brought this story or that. Mark may have had some of the papyrus rolls transcribed by his Greek friends. His contribution was the assembling of this material and weaving it all together in such a way that it would speak courage and assurance and joy to men and women sore pressed and in need of help. With this material out of which to build his story, Mark began:

Here begins the Message of Salvation through Jesus Christ the Son of God:

As it is written in Isaiah the Prophet—

A voice resounds in the wilderness:

Prepare the way of the Lord,

Make his paths smooth,

so John the Baptizer appeared in the wilderness and announced a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And he preached as follows: "After me comes one who is mightier than I, and I am not worthy to stoop and loose the latchet of his shoes.

I have baptized you with water;

He will baptize you with holy Spirit."

Then came Jesus. From that hour when he rose from the waters of baptism and heard his Father's voice,

Thou art my Son dearly loved,

In thee is my delight,

he knew himself God's Chosen. Yet he told no one. He went off alone to face his destiny, and, after weeks of solitude among the prowling beasts of the wilderness, sustained by

messengers from God, he came forth to begin his work. As Mark wrote of those weeks, was he recalling the words from the Testament of Naphtali?

If ye work that which is good, my children,  
Both men and angels will bless you;  
And God shall be glorified among the Gentiles  
through you,  
And the devil shall flee from you,  
And the wild beasts shall fear you,  
And the Lord shall love you.

Mark continues:

Now after John was cast in prison, Jesus appeared in Galilee and proclaimed the Message of God:

“The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Message of Salvation.”

Jesus went forth to preach salvation. Men must discover his secret for themselves. And they could discover it only as they looked upon Jesus day by day. The story moves swiftly forward toward such an hour of discovery. Nor is Mark interested in a chronological sequence of events. What he seeks is to gather out of his material those incidents which, heaped one upon the other, must inevitably have led to Peter's sudden illumination. So he recounts this act and that.

Jesus begins to gather friends about him; he teaches in the synagogues of Galilee, the demons recognize him, but he silences them; the crowds press about him; the Pharisees challenge him, and in the midst of controversy with them there falls across the page the first far shadow of the cross,

A time will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them.

The Sabbath controversies mount until the Pharisees take council with the Herodians “with a view to putting him to

death." He begins to teach, forthwith, the chosen group of his disciples, and shares with them the meaning of the parables, hidden from the crowds that follow him.

In many a parable he spoke the word to them, as far as they could listen to it, but in private he explained everything to his disciples,

wrote Mark. But Mark is most interested to recount the power of Jesus over demon-ridden men, over the storm-tossed sea, over the sick and the suffering ones—the woman who had been twelve years ill, the little daughter of the great Jairus, dying even as her father sought the Healer—story after story of his compassion and his power.

Yet Jesus is still pursued by the haggling Pharisees, demanding that his disciples conform to the least letter of the Law. He turns upon them with words of scathing rebuke,

You give up what God has commanded in order to observe what has been handed down to you.

Then he turns to the crowds that are pressing about him, and says,

Listen to me, all of you, and understand this:

Nothing outside a man can defile him by entering him;

It is what comes from him that defiles him.

If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen to this.

Even his disciples do not understand. When they are alone with him, they ask the meaning of his words. How poignant his reply,

So you do not understand, either?

Incident heaps on incident. There is the little episode of the foreign woman who caught his swift play of humor and cried delightedly, "The little dogs under the table do eat

the children's crumbs," and goes her way home to find her small daughter well and happy. There is the enthusiasm of the crowds who have gathered about a deaf stammerer, "How splendidly he has done it all!" they cry, "He actually makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak!" The Pharisees demand a sign. But no sign follows. He has cured the sick, he has cast out demons, he has opened blind eyes, he has cleansed the lepers, he has fed the hungry, and not even his disciples understand.

Then comes the high moment in this drama of apparent defeat. He turns his back on the Pharisees who hate him, and the crowds who are after what they can get from him. He goes with his disciples to Caesarea Philippi. And Peter fathoms his secret.

"Thou art the Christ!"

he cries. "Keep the secret. Tell no man," replies Jesus.

Now the cross appears stark and grim. Mark tells us that he spoke quite freely of the agony ahead and of the glory beyond,

Peter took him and began to reprove him for it, but he turned on him and noticing his disciples reproved Peter, telling him, "Get behind me, you Satan! Your outlook is not God's but man's." Then he called the whole company to him with his disciples, telling them, "If anyone wishes to follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and so follow me;

For whosoever wants to save his life will lose it,

And whosoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.

What profit is it for a man to gain the whole world and to forfeit his soul?

What could a man offer as an equivalent for his soul?

Soon comes the epiphany upon a high hill—Mount Tabor in Galilee, some like to think, but Mark says nothing of this. Peter and James and John behold him as he talks with



Moses and Elijah. They of the Law and the Prophets fade away. A Voice sounds from the overshadowing cloud,

This is my Son, dearly loved: listen to him.

The disciples are alone with Jesus. This experience, too, is to be kept secret.

Now the action moves swiftly on to Jerusalem. The shadow of the Cross grows blacker. The disciples argue over who shall be the greatest. He continues to teach the crowds that throng about him. The Pharisees continue to harp on legalistic matters. The young man whom Jesus loved turns sorrowfully away. The road of discipleship is too stern, too austere. To James and John he promises the cup of martyrdom, and ere Mark's gospel was written they had drunk it to the dregs.

He enters Jerusalem, and the crowds coming up to the feast wave their green branches and shout their glad Hosannas. His passion for God blazes forth in one sudden act of authority. He sweeps from the temple court all those who are there for their own selfish gain,

My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations,  
You have made it a den of robbers.

Mark explains the reactions to this act with characteristic terseness,

This came to the ears of the scribes and high priests, and they tried to have him put to death, for they were afraid of him. But the multitudes were all astonished at his teaching. And when evening came, he went outside the city.

Day after day the controversy rages. If only the scribes and their leaders can trap him into some admission that will give them cause for his arrest, but still "the mass of the people listen with delight to him." He talks with his disciples of the

terrible suffering that lies ahead—the impending doom of Jerusalem, when

not a stone shall be left on another, without being torn down. Brother will betray brother to death, the father will betray his child, children will rise against their parents and put them to death, and you will be hated by all men on account of my name; but he will be saved who holds out to the very end.

Here Mark uses with some Christian modifications a little Jewish apocalypse, that form of “cartoon” so dear to Jewish hearts—so baffling to many of us—yet we can but realize that here, too, Mark is seeking to bring heart of hope to men and women sore pressed in life’s dark hour.

Now comes the story of the Passion, so stark, so stern, so splendid, that even before the record of the first Easter dawn we are swept beyond apparent tragedy into assured triumph. With compassion like that of the Son of Man looking upon the shepherdless multitudes, Mark pours forth his austere drama of controversy with the leaders, misunderstanding by the crowds, desertion by his friends. Yet through it all Jesus moves with God-like majesty. Even the centurion who stands facing him as he dies cries out,

This man was certainly a son of God.

The ending of Mark’s roll was lost very early, and there were various attempts to supply the loss. One ancient scribe—surely he must have been of the church in Rome—summed up the whole matter thus:

The women reported briefly to Peter and his companions all they had been told. And afterward Jesus himself sent out by them from the east to the west the sacred and incorruptible message of eternal salvation.

This Gospel became for the Romans their treasured possession, and they sent it out from west to east, where next we meet it.

## *The Syrian Gospel*

One harvest day Jesus called us and His other friends to the hills. The earth was fragrant and, like the daughter of a king at her wedding feast, she wore all her jewels. And the sky was her bridegroom.

When we reached the heights Jesus stood still in the grove of laurels, and He said, "Rest here, quiet your mind and tune your heart, for I have much to tell you."

Then we reclined on the grass, and the summer flowers were all about us, and Jesus sat in our midst. And Jesus said:

Blessed are the serene in spirit.

Blessed are they who are not held by possessions, for they shall be free.

Blessed are they who remember their pain, and in their pain await their joy.

Blessed are they who hunger after truth and beauty, for their hunger shall bring bread, and their thirst cool water.

Blessed are the kindly, for they shall be consoled for their kindness.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall be one with God.

Blessed are the merciful, for mercy shall be their portion.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for their spirit shall dwell above the battle, and they shall turn the potter's field into a garden.

Blessed are they who are hunted, for they shall be swift of foot, and they shall be winged.

Rejoice and be joyful, for you have found the kingdom of heaven within you. The singers of old were persecuted when they sang of the kingdom. You shall be persecuted, and therein lies your honor, and therein your reward.

You are the salt of the earth; should the salt lose its savor, wherewith shall the food of man's heart be salted?

You are the light of the world. Put not that light under a bushel. Let it shine rather from the summit, to those who seek the City of God. . . .

And it was now evening, and Jesus walked down from the hills, and all of us followed Him. As I followed I was . . . remembering all that He had said; for I knew that the words that had fallen like flakes that day must set and grow firm like crystals, and that the wings that had fluttered above our heads were to beat the earth like iron hoofs.

**M**ARK wrote his Gospel to meet the crisis which confronted the Roman church. Because most of its members were slaves and artisans and other humble workers, he wrote not in the literary Greek of that day but in the everyday speech of the common people. His book was just what they wanted, and the desire of many of them was not only to hear it read but to have a copy of their own. Rome was one of the great publishing centers of the ancient world. Copies of a book were dictated to a roomful of slaves who were highly trained in beautiful script and in accurate recording. In some instances as many as fifty copies were made at one dictation. Was there a Christian publisher who had copies of Mark's Gospel made in this way?

In a comparatively short time, some copies may have found their way to friends of Peter in Antioch, and we know that one copy was eagerly read and reread by a man named Matthew, a Jewish Christian living somewhere in the country districts to the east of Antioch. As he pored over the precious papyrus roll, he recalled continually another treasured record which he already knew by heart, which helped to supply the omissions or ignorances of Mark about what Jesus actually said. Sometimes these sayings were parables, sometimes sayings like the great wisdom literature of the Jews; sometimes they were remembered with the occasion of their utterance, sometimes quite out of context. Luke quoted later one such saying:

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said,  
It is more blessed to give than to receive.

And in the next century Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, urged his friends to love the things which God loved and to

Remember the words which the Lord spoke, as He taught:

Judge not that you receive not judgment;

Forgive that you may be forgiven;

Be merciful that you may receive mercy;

With whatever measure you measure,

Shall it be measured back to you again.

And again:

Blessed are the poor and they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God.

Besides this second major source of his Gospel, Matthew had other material, at least some of it unknown to his contemporary, Luke, and some of it probably rejected by him. The Roman Gospel, published anonymously, was a great inspiration to Matthew but he was by no means satisfied with it, nor were his friends. Yet he liked it so well that he included, unacknowledged as the custom was, almost the entire book. Although Mark's record about Jesus gave Matthew the inspiration for writing his Gospel, his purpose differed from that of Mark, as Syria differed from Rome.

The site of Jerusalem was not very far away, and Jerusalem had been razed to the ground. In the decades since this overwhelming catastrophe, the gulf between the Christians and the orthodox Jews had steadily widened. Bereft of their temple and its stately liturgy of morning and evening sacrifice, and of the celebration of the great feast days in the temple courts—seasons that had brought fellow religionists from all over the world to join in the great processions—the orthodox Jews now placed increasing emphasis on the importance of the Law and the Prophets. They adhered with even greater devotion to their carefully ordered way of life in all its details. And the Christians, both Jews and

Greeks, came more and more to follow their own separate way.

As time passed and they meditated on these events, the Christians came to believe that the destruction of Jerusalem was linked up with the Jewish rejection of Jesus, their long-expected Messiah. Why did the Jews reject Jesus? Could they not see that he fulfilled all the hopes, all the longings, all the dreams of all God's prophets?

Seizing upon Mark's great creative idea of a Gospel, following his example of writing in the everyday spoken Greek, this Jewish Christian, whose name may have been Matthew—he was certainly not one of Jesus' twelve disciples—wrote his Gospel for Jewish Christians. His purpose was very clear. He would begin, not as Mark had done—with John the Baptist—but with a prologue, starting this with Abraham, the founder of the Jewish race, the forefather of Jesus Christ. And the child who sprang from Abraham and from royal David's line was to bear the name of Jesus, Savior. Would he not save his people from their sins?

All this happened for the fulfillment of what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

The maiden will conceive and bear a son,  
And his name is to be called Immanuel  
(which may be translated, God is with us).

And lest some think that only the sons of Abraham, the Jews, were heirs of the promises, Matthew incorporated that exquisite story of the Wise Men from the East who brought their gifts and worshiped the baby Jesus. He was indeed the Savior of mankind. This idea weaves in and out of the Gospel like a golden thread even to the very end where the theme, God-is-with-us, is caught up again in other words:

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the hill where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him, they worshiped him, though some were in doubt. Then Jesus came

forward to them and said, "Full authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth; go and make disciples of all nations, baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the holy Spirit, and teach them to obey all the commands I have laid upon you. And all the time I will be with you, to the very end of the world."

Like a refrain, over and over and over again, Matthew bears witness to the diligence with which he and his Syrian friends had searched the Scriptures, to the extent to which their thought was colored and sometimes even determined by the words of psalmists and prophets. With complete freedom, Matthew condenses or expands Mark's narrative to his own liking. He even corrects that record that it may accord more fully with the word of Zechariah as he understands it. Matthew was not a poet, and he failed to grasp the significance of the poetic parallelism, where the second line repeats the statement of the first. This passage illustrates very well the general manner in which Matthew adapts Mark's material.

As Jesus and his disciples neared Jerusalem, he sent two of them ahead on an errand. Mark continues with the instructions of Jesus:

"Go to the village in front of you. As soon as you enter it, you will find a colt tethered, on which no one has ever sat; untether it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing that?' say, 'The Lord needs it,' and he will send it back immediately." Off they went and found a colt tethered outside a door in the street. They untethered it; but some of the bystanders said to them, "What do you mean by untethering that colt?" So they answered as Jesus had told them, and the men allowed them to go. Then they brought the colt to Jesus, and when they had put their clothes on it, Jesus seated himself. Many also spread their clothes on the road, while others strewed leaves cut from the fields; and both those in front and those that followed shouted,

"Hosanna!

Blessed be he who comes in the Lord's name!

Blessed be the Reign to come, our father David's reign!  
Hosanna in high heaven!"

The parallel passage in Matthew reads:

"Go to the village in front of you and you will at once find an ass tethered, with a colt alongside of her; untether them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you will say that the Lord needs them; then he will at once let them go." (This took place for the fulfillment of what had been spoken by the prophet,

Tell the daughter of Sion

"Here is your king coming to you,

He is gentle and mounted on an ass,

And on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.")

So the disciples went and did as Jesus told them; they brought the ass and the colt and put their clothes on them. Jesus seated himself on them, and the greater part of the crowd spread their clothes on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and strewed them on the road. And the crowds who went in front of him and who followed behind shouted,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed be he who comes in the Lord's name!

Hosanna in high heaven!"

It is fascinating to study the minds of the two writers through a comparison of parallel passages. This much they had in common—a great passion of devotion to their fellow Christians, a profound conviction that in Jesus could be found the answer to all their needs. And each of them felt the compulsion to write in such fashion as to meet the needs of his own friends.

What more natural than that Matthew, living in the midst of orthodox Jews, now laying the greatest stress on the Lawgiver Moses, should incorporate into his Gospel the words of the new Law? Was not Jesus the Lawgiver who had superseded Moses? Did he not fulfill all prophecy? Mark had suggested this when he told of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration conversing with Moses and Elijah. Then the old



order was overshadowed by a cloud, and Jesus, God's chosen, was alone with his friends. The meaning of this experience Matthew made explicit.

As Moses gave the Law from Mount Sinai, so Matthew pictured Jesus as going up into a mountain and there seating himself (as the custom was for all Jewish rabbis when they taught) to instruct his disciples in the new Law. The voice of God thundered from Sinai, but Jesus spoke as a teacher to his friends, "Blessed are they . . .," he began, and from the days of the Syrian Matthew to a Syrian poet of our own day a countless multitude have sought to fathom all the meaning of those words first translated by an unknown compiler of the Sayings of Jesus.

Matthew gathered up many a saying to show the contrast between Moses and Jesus. "Ye have heard that it was said . . . but I say. . . ." But Christian though he was, even though he wrote into his Gospel the "Woes" against the scribes, yet he also included the words,

Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law till all things be accomplished,

and that poignant cry, recorded by the compiler of the Sayings,

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

There is much in this Gospel that would suggest that Matthew was himself a teacher; one might even fancy him a converted rabbi who had become a good churchman. This may have been why he treasured the word, not found in the other Gospels, perhaps his autograph:

Every scribe who has become a disciple of the Kingdom of Heaven must be like a householder who can supply from his storeroom new things as well as old.

Matthew was deeply interested in the life of the Christian Church as it had emerged from the Jewish synagogue. He saw in the confession of Peter the very *rock* upon which Jesus had founded that Church.

When Jesus reached the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples,

"Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"

They said,

"Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

He said to them,

"But who do you say that I am?"

Simon Peter answered,

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!"

Jesus answered,

"Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, for human nature has not disclosed this to you, but my Father in heaven! But I tell you, your name is Peter, a rock, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not subdue it."

It is quite probable that in modifying certain details of Mark's narrative of this episode, Matthew drew from a Syrian source. It may even be surmised that Matthew himself added the names of Elijah and Jeremiah. Good Jew that he was, he could not but delight in the play on the meaning of Peter's name. The verse that follows, about the keys of heaven, is thought by many to be a late addition of some copyist. Certainly it stands in marked contrast to the profound simplicity of Jesus' teaching about direct access to God, "When you pray, say, Father."

Matthew was more deeply imbued with the apocalyptic ideas than any other of the Gospel writers. Perhaps that is why he has included that glorious parable in which we are all caught up into some of the finest social aspects of that

expression of faith which longed so passionately for "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." As one recalls the parables of Jesus one by one, how short they are, how vivid! They deal with the everyday life of the people of Palestine. However clear their meaning, one must ponder well to catch the deeper significance. There is not one word which can be omitted. So valuable a method of teaching, one so common at that time, must have inspired one and another of the followers of Jesus, particularly the teachers, to make up their own parables.

Matthew was a teacher born. He must have had real creative genius to appreciate so new a form of writing as Mark's and to see the possibility of using his Gospel along with the other available material from various sources to build out of it all a book which won so great a place in the life of the early church. Realizing all this and knowing, as we do, that it was the most natural thing in the world for a Jew to credit what he wrote to some great one whose spirit he sought to interpret, may we not ask whether it was Matthew himself who wrote that dramatic scene of the sheep and the goats? Who shall say? It makes a magnificent climax to the teachings, and yet it has a repetitive quality which lacks the perfection of the tiny vignettes which Jesus wrought with such exquisite insight and deep poetic feeling.

From the fantasy of the last judgment, the narrative moves swiftly into the story of the Passion. Once again as one reads rapidly through the whole account, Mark's "stripped Gothic" stands out sharply in the midst of the variety of Matthew's embellishments, coming from one source and another. Some of the additions have a dramatic quality, some are more like the hearsay which gathers around any tragedy. But not even tawdry bits can hide the glowing splendor of the Man.

The Romans who read Mark's Gospel saw in Jesus a man of action. When Ignatius went to Rome, there to face the wild beasts in the arena (about A.D. 117), he may have carried with him, as a treasured possession, the Gospel as written

by Matthew. And as the Roman church read this narrative, they beheld Jesus as the fulfillment of God's age-long purpose, and heard echoing from the Galilean hilltop the new Law. The story of the love of God in Jesus Christ had gone from Jerusalem to Rome, then back to the East through Mark's Gospel, and returned to the West in the roll of the Gospel according to Matthew.

And still the spirit of God brooded over the lives of men. A Greek freedman also wrote a Gospel. What of him?

## *Christianity's Story for Theophilus*

The third book of the Gospel, according to Luke, Luke that physician who, after the ascension of Christ, when Paul had taken him with him as companion of his journey, composed in his own name, on the basis of report. However, he did not himself see the Lord in the flesh, and therefore as he could "trace the course of events" he set them down. So also he began his story with the birth of John.

But the Acts of all the apostles were written in one volume. Luke compiled for "most excellent Theophilus" what things were done in detail in his presence, as he plainly shows by omitting both the death of Peter and also the departure of Paul from the city, when he departed for Spain.

WE HAD climbed the long hill with its many, many steps to the summit of Saint Thomas' Mount in Madras, South India. We had seen the darker *stain* on the gray stone—the blood of Thomas the Doubter, martyred by those who rejected his Lord. And then we met the little English nun who had lived for more than fifty years in that convent in an alien land, because long, long ago the blessed Saint Thomas had gone there before her. We were told again the story of how he had heard the words of his Lord,

You will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem and all over Judea and Samaria, and to the very ends of the earth,

and how, bearing in his arms a precious treasure, he had made his way across the burning sands of the Arabian desert and set sail in an open rowboat across the trackless sea. Surviving all the perils of the deep, he had landed on the Malabar Coast of southwest India and brought to the people there the good news of Jesus Christ.

Later he had crossed the towering Ghats and had come to the great city of Madras. But before they slew him by the gray stone on the hilltop, he had entrusted his treasure to those who had guarded it ever since—and so, with reverent mien aglow with childlike faith, that little nun led us into the dimly lighted chapel and held a candle that we might see the fading portrait of our Lady with the Christ Child in her arms—"the very portrait which the blessed St. Luke painted expressly for St. Thomas, before ever he set out on his journey to India. Once," she told us, "because the canvas was so faded, an impious one had thought to improve on the work of the blessed St. Luke, and he was stricken blind ere ever his brush profaned the sacred canvas; and once a reverent one, with long fasting and prayer, made ready to restore the fading colors, but the paint rolled off the surface like quicksilver, and thus, because of his good intent, was he saved from unwittingly committing an impious act."

In my ignorance I might have thought the canvas a possible copy of the work of some twelfth-century artist, brought to India after the days of the great missionary activity of St. Francis Xavier. But this I knew that day in the chapel on Saint Thomas' Mount—that the devoted little nun was not the only one of us to see, in the writer of the third Gospel, a great artist. If she thought the medium of his art paint and canvas, and I thought it a stylus and papyrus roll, yet both of us gave thanks for his marvelous portraiture of a young Jewish Mother and her Infant Son, wrapped in swaddling clothes in a cave in Bethlehem—where there echoed a song of

Peace on earth, among men of good will.

The earliest reference which we have to the writing of Luke and of Acts comes to us from the Muratorian Canon, a fragmentary document containing a partial catalogue of the books of the New Testament, compiled about A.D. 175. By that time the Christians, ever on the alert for new forms

in which to spread the "new word," had either created the idea, or swiftly adopted what their pagan contemporaries were slow to employ—the "codex" or book with leaves of papyrus instead of rolls. This made possible larger volumes. The four Gospels were now regularly copied together either in the order to which we are accustomed, or in the "western" order, Matthew, John, Luke, Mark. Acts was thenceforth copied either with the Pauline Epistles or, more often, with the general Epistles. People completely lost sight of the fact—which might not have concerned them greatly in any case—that the writer of the third Gospel was as great a creative genius in Christian literature as was Mark who devised the first Gospel.

By A.D. 175 the Church had accepted the tradition that these two books, Luke-Acts, were written by Paul's physician, the Greek freedman, Luke (the form of his name indicates that he had been a slave). The two volumes, Luke-Acts, were beyond question Part I and Part II of a single work on the rise and spread of Christianity. They were as certainly written by a Greek. He used his sources with great skill and in his writings, which appeared anonymously, there is a real literary flavor. In exquisite Greek Luke wrote, at the beginning of his first roll, an introduction to his history of the rise and spread of Christianity. In briefer form, at the beginning of the second roll, he again addressed Theophilus, to whom the work was dedicated. The comparison between Josephus and Luke at this point is most interesting. Josephus begins his first roll, *Against Apion*:

In my history of our *Antiquities*, most excellent Epaphroditus, I have, I think, made sufficiently clear to any who may peruse that work the extreme antiquity of our Jewish race, the purity of the original stock and the manner in which it established itself in the country which we occupy today. That history embraces a period of five thousand years, and was written by me in Greek on the basis of our sacred books. Since, however, I observe that a considerable number of persons . . . dis-

credit the statements in my history concerning our antiquity, and adduce as proof of the comparative modernity of our race the fact that it has not been thought worthy of mention by the best-known Greek historians, I consider it my duty to devote a brief treatise to all these points, in order at once to convict our detractors of malignity and deliberate falsehood, to correct the ignorance of others, and to instruct all who desire to know the truth concerning the antiquity of our race.

Book ii begins:

In the first volume of this work, my most esteemed Epaphroditus, I demonstrated the antiquity of our race, corroborating my statements by the writings of the Phoenicians, Chaldeans and Egyptians besides citing as witnesses numerous Greek historians. I also challenged the statements of Manetho, Chaeremon and some others. . . . I shall now proceed to refute the rest of the authors who have attacked us.

Luke begins his first roll with these words, so familiar to many of us in one translation or another:

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compose a narrative of those things which have been accomplished among us, as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and teachers of the word, it seemed desirable to me also, having traced out from the first with accuracy, to write for you a consecutive narrative, most worthy Theophilus, that you might have complete assurance concerning those matters about which you have received oral instruction.

His second roll begins:

In my earlier roll, O Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day in which he gave his instructions through the Holy Spirit, to the men whom he had chosen, and was received up into Heaven. He had shown himself alive to them in many convincing ways appearing among them over a period of forty days and talking with them of the Kingdom of God.



It was in the last decade of the first century when the exaggerated egotism of the Emperor Domitian led to his emphasis on worship accorded himself that even the right of the Jews to worship one God only was challenged anew. Josephus pleaded with all his eloquence for the privilege which had previously been accorded his fellow countrymen because of their great antiquity, their ancient and honorable history—an appeal which carried weight with the Romans who prided themselves on their own antiquity and on their steadfast maintenance of all the great traditions of the past. Did not their golden age lie far behind them? It may well have been in this same decade that Luke brought to completion in some Greek city his great defense of Christianity. It is clear that he wrote to prove Christianity deserving of the place of a “*religio licita*,” “permitted religion,” in the Roman Empire. Had not those brought to trial before the Roman tribunal been declared “not guilty” again and again? Pilate the Procurator of Judea had said at the trial of Jesus:

“You brought me this man as being an inciter to rebellion among the people. I have examined him before you and found nothing criminal about him, for all your accusations against him. No, nor has Herod, for he has remitted him to us. He has done nothing, you see, that calls for death; so I shall release him with a whipping.”

But they shouted one and all, “Away with him! Release Bar-Abbas for us!”

Again Pilate addressed them, for he wanted to release Jesus; but they roared, “To the cross, to the cross with him!”

He asked them a third time, “But what crime has he committed? I have found nothing about him that deserves death; so I shall release him with a whipping.”

But they loudly urged their demand that he should be crucified, and their shouts carried the day.

King Agrippa assured the governor Festus, before whom Paul was finally brought to trial accused of “stirring up sedition among the Jews all over the world, a ring leader of the Nazarene sect,”

"This man has done nothing to deserve death or imprisonment. He might have been released if he had not appealed to Caesar."

For Paul, taking advantage of his Roman citizenship, had appealed to Caesar, and Festus had but one course open to him:

"You have appealed to Caesar? Very well, you must go to Caesar!"

And after he had been brought to Rome for trial (how well known were the long delays before the whim of the Emperor granted a hearing!),

he stayed for two full years in rented lodgings of his own, and welcomed everybody who came to see him, preaching the Kingdom of God to them and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ openly and unhindered.

Luke gathered together with the utmost care all his sources from eyewitnesses of the events and from teachers of the word. Theophilus, for whom he wrote, must have a complete sweep of this mighty march of events. No one who had all the available facts could doubt that this glorious faith in the Kingdom of God was the sure road to peace among men of good will. And did not the Romans pride themselves that they maintained the peace? The governor Felix might well be restive when Paul talked of "morality, self-mastery, and the future judgment." True, Felix had a rather accurate knowledge of the "Way" but he was out for a bribe, and Paul offered him none! It is in the words of Paul's defense before Festus that one sees the full purpose of Luke's great work:

I have committed no offense against the Law of the Jews, against the temple, or against Caesar.

These words must have been in Luke's mind from the very first. With all an artist's skill he drew his beautiful pictures of the beginnings of Christianity. The first material which he introduced was a little group of vignettes—the birth of John, the birth of Jesus, the Boy in the temple.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature,  
And in favor with God and man.

Those exquisite drawings, glowing with the fervor and piety of the devout Jews, make abundantly clear the fact that Luke saw this child of Adam also a son of Abraham. How perfectly he has kept the Semitic flavor of these early records which those who have lived deeply into the poetry of psalmist and prophet fully appreciate! In the Magnificat of Mary one hears the echo of the Song of Hannah.

Luke's Gospel continually bears witness to his religious devotion and his deep love of the beautiful. How Greek he was in his outlook, for all his appreciation of the Semitic forms of the poetry of Jesus! In this he differs markedly from Matthew. They both preserve Jesus' vivid picture of the one lost sheep, yet how different the setting. The Jewish Matthew with his keen sense of the solidarity of the group recounts the parable:

Beware of feeling scornful of one single little child, for I tell you that in heaven their angels have continual access to my Father in heaven. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them strays away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills, and go in search of the one that is astray? And if he happens to find it, I tell you he rejoices more over it than he does over the ninety-nine that did not stray. In just that way, it is the will of my Father in heaven that not a single one of these children be lost.

Luke who cherished the Greek's emphasis on the worth of the individual writes:

What man among you who has a hundred sheep and has

lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost!" Just so, I tell you, God rejoices over one sinner that repents!

True to the Greek idea of literary values, Luke repeatedly omits from his narrative the foreign words which Mark has cherished. He rewrites the account of the entrance into Jerusalem leaving out the word *Hosanna* which had such a barbaric sound to Greek ears. And when he tells the story of *Gethsemane*, he omits that uncouth Semitic name and explains simply, "He made his way to the Hill of Olives, as he was accustomed." Mark kept the Aramaic word, even while carefully translating, "Abba, Father," but Luke records Jesus' prayer, "Father, if it please thee, take this cup away from me, but Thy will, not mine, be done."

When Luke began writing, he had the Sayings of Jesus, perhaps in somewhat different form from Matthew. He had, in a source otherwise unknown, some of the most beautiful and most significant of all the parables of Jesus—the lost coin, the lost boy, the good Samaritan, and many another story unfamiliar to Mark and Matthew; he had a story of the passion differing at many points from that of Mark. Originally he may have begun his first volume following the introductory paragraph addressed to Theophilus, as other chronicles from Egypt and from Rome began, with the painstaking dating of events:

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, Philip his brother tetrarch of the country of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert.

When, out of this material, Luke had built a short but very precious record of Jesus and had written the longer sec-

tion of his work on the deeds of the apostles beginning from Jerusalem, sweeping out into the wider circle of Judaea and Samaria, and on to Rome itself, there came unexpectedly into his hands two sources of which he had previously been ignorant. One was the very Jewish source which made it possible for him to begin with the birth of John instead of with his preaching, still beginning, however, with that one who was more than a prophet, and yet less than the least in the kingdom of God. Luke would have Theophilus understand how truly this "new thing" which had come to pass grew out of the age-long purpose of God.

And then there came a source, so rich, so illuminating that he could but pay his tribute in true Greek fashion to this great writing, the story of Jesus as written at Rome. At various different points in his previously completed story of Jesus he inserted blocks of Mark's material—rewritten in some measure, as already suggested—omitting those barbaric words from a foreign tongue, smoothing out some of the roughness of Mark's Greek, condensing at times, adding a point here or there. Matthew had apparently memorized his sources and woven them together into his scheme of things as a Jew would naturally have worked out his book. Luke, like other Greek writers, embodied his sources in longer or shorter sections with such revision as helped to make them more nearly consonant with his literary standards, keeping, as those standards demanded, something of the distinctive literary flavor of each original source.

Out of all his many sources, Luke produced his two rolls. What a priceless treasure he made ready for Theophilus and for every Friend-of-God from that day to this! How many are the choice friendships we treasure with people whom the "sponge of oblivion" would otherwise have washed away—Zechariah and Elizabeth; Simeon, Anna, the humble shepherds who heard the angels sing; bustling Martha and meditative Mary; Zacchaeus peering down from a tree; the eunuch of Queen Candace, the Roman Cornelius; Rhoda, who for-

got to open the gate, Dorcas and Lydia, seller of purple; Damaris at Athens, the tentmakers at Corinth, Aquila and Priscilla; and many another who, humble and nameless, helped to spread the story of God's beloved Son. "God who had no favorites" sent not only to the sons of Israel but to the Gentiles that from among them also "he might secure a people to bear his Name." To all alike came the "good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all," that "through his name all who put their trust in him should receive forgiveness of their sins." From his own hired house in Rome, the capital of the world, Paul announced, for all the world to hear, "the coming of the Kingdom of God, and taught concerning the Lord Jesus Christ."

Can one add more to this most beautiful of all the books that have ever been written, the two choice rolls of Luke-Acts?

## *The Gospel for the Greeks*

The Light shines in the darkness  
And the darkness has not overpowered it.

THUS wrote John. All through the dark years of the persecutions under Domitian the Light had continued to shine out, and though Darkness had wrestled with it as a man struggles with his adversary, Light still blazed forth triumphant. In the last years of the Emperor Domitian or in the days of his successor, in the city of Ephesus, there lived a man in the very prime of his strength, who had brooded long over this unending struggle of light and darkness, even from that far-off time when God's voice had spoken,

"Let there be Light,"

and there was light.

This John did not live in carefree fashion on the surface of things. "Eat, drink, for tomorrow we perish!" was no creed of his. He was forever pondering the deeper meaning of things, forever looking beneath the surface of men's actions to the underlying motives. He came to know well and to care greatly for many whom the darkness of ignorance and misapprehension threatened to engulf. He was thinking of them when he picked up his stylus and began to write for his fellow Christians the inner meaning of that incomprehensible reality,

The Word became flesh, and tarried among us, and we beheld his glory—glory as of the Father's only Son—full of grace and truth.

How could he draw them all into the circle of the eternal splendor? How could he illumine for them all the inner meaning of the manna from heaven, the outpoured life of the vine, the eternal significance of the bread and wine?

Some there were who had long followed the teaching from John who, sent from God, yet baptized only with water. They did not fully grasp the fact that a greater than John was in their midst. Some of them had come out of one or another of the ancient mystery cults where they knew already the story of a god who was fated to die as the summer dies, and to rise again with the fragrant spring. It was no new experience for them to share in a meal where they partook of the very life of the god and thereby took on immortality as all the gods were immortal. But who were Osiris or Diana or Demeter before the glory of God's only Son?

There were others who had learned to cultivate a fine apathy, a complete and lofty detachment in the face of disaster, to move through all the pain and joy of life unmoved, outwardly calm, self-possessed, assured, despising all human weakness, and yet, in an hour when death stalked through the home and claimed his own, too often their terrible calm was shattered and they were men bereft! It was not enough to say, "This lad has died, but he was only a child. What matter?" How John loved these fellow Christians, struggling like himself from the darkness to the light. Only the Jews he hated—those Judases "who had loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." To them first the only-begotten Son had come,

He came to his own,  
And his own gave him no welcome.

Always the anguish of this ancient wrong casts its dark shadow over the columns of the roll he wrote. The pain of it is like the pain of an old wound that never heals. Was this John also of those selfsame Jews? Had he as a boy seen his



father and his mother driven out from the fellowship of kinsfolk even as the Son of Man had been rejected by his own? Had that experience burned so deep a scar into his brooding soul that it took a lifetime of the love of God to learn that in his world there is no place for hate? Was he writing most of all to himself when he penned the words,

Darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. He who says he is "in the light" and hates his brother is in darkness still. He walks in darkness and does not know where he is going, for the darkness has blinded his eyes.

John does not keep the Semitic environment out of which the story of Jesus came in the same way as did the earlier writers. He does not include the new Law from the Mount of Beatitudes, nor the foreign words with which Mark quite unconsciously brought to his Roman readers the flavor of another land, nor does he write in the beautiful Greek of Luke-Acts. It is not that the Greek of the fourth Gospel is grammatically incorrect, or in any way savoring of a foreign dialect, but it has a kind of flavor of the stark simplicity of the Hebrew speech as though its writer's mind worked that way. And above all, in its profound interpretation of the Son of Man—save in that one incident where the Greeks sought out Philip, asking to see Jesus, and Jesus had answered them in the symbols of their dying and growing wheat, the earnest of an undying hope treasured in their own Eleusinian mysteries—all the symbolism comes out of the very warp and woof of Jewish life.

It is as though, a little lad at his mother's knee, he had heard over and over and over again of the pillar of fire that lighted the way in blackness of the wilderness night; of the living water which sprang from the rock for the refreshing of the escaped slaves—not stagnant pools to taunt them as men are taunted by the half truths of the ancient gods, who are no gods; of the bread from heaven in mercy given; of the serpent lifted high above the stricken people that whoso looked on

it might live. "Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up that all who put their trust in him may have eternal life." The delicate fragrance of a half-forgotten memory exhales from the grapevines, as the vine and the branches once wrought in gold on the temple doors give meaning to the continuing life in God.

In Ephesus there were Christians who were quite certain that "things are not what they seem." They had been repulsed rather than attracted by the straightforward narrative with which Mark had delighted his Roman friends. It was so forthright, so earthy. The Son of Man had looked with anger upon the Pharisees who had thrust that man with the withered hand into the synagogue. But the divine Son of God must move above all anger. His humanity was only "seeming." He was God and not man. To these "Seemists" who denied the humanity of Jesus, John must declare the reality of the word made flesh.

There were those who knew that through *knowledge* came salvation. "For lack of knowledge my people perish" had been the heartbroken cry of Hosea. And Paul had written to his Greek friends in Corinth—did John know that letter?—of "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." No mystery cult could give such knowledge as came through God's beloved Son. The Greek word for *knowledge* is transliterated *gnosis* whence comes the name of the *gnostic* sect, the *knowing* ones. John would have his friends know that they are the true gnostics. He defines life eternal,

That they should know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ.

Mark had written a Gospel for the Romans. Matthew had woven Mark's writing into his Gospel for Jewish-Christians. Luke had incorporated great blocks of that message of good news into his book for Theophilus. Now John with a daring

and creative genius all his own took this Gospel which some of his friends found crude and earthy and transformed it into Greek ways of thought, made it vivid and meaningful and profoundly satisfying to cultured Greeks groping their way into richer life than they had ever known before.

Mark tells how as Jesus had entered the city of Jerusalem in his last journey he drove from the temple all those who bought and sold there.

They came to Jerusalem. And as he entered the temple court he began driving out all those who bought and sold in the temple; and he tipped over the tables of the moneychangers and the stands of the dealers in doves, and turned back those who were making a short-cut through the sacred court. And he taught them, and said, "Is it not written

'My house shall be called a house of prayer  
for all people'?

But you have turned it into a den of thieves."

John places at the very beginning of the ministry of Jesus this "zeal for the house of the Lord":

Jesus went on up to Jerusalem and in the temple court he came upon the dealers in oxen, sheep and doves, who sat there along with the moneychangers. So he made a whip of cords and drove them all out of the temple, along with their sheep and cattle, spilled the changers' money and knocked over their tables. To the dove merchants he said, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house into a bazaar!" But his disciples were reminded of the Bible text: "Zeal for thy house consumes me."

Forthwith begins the first of that long series of controversies with the Jews who from first to last failed tragically to understand this kinsman of theirs.

John used a Greek form or—one might perhaps better say—an ancient form of literary expression so foreign to our modern psychological approach to life attitudes that we need to try to push back into the real experience of this ancient

way of thought and seek to translate it into the forms of expression of our own day with the courage and insight which John showed in translating Mark into the Gospel for the Greeks.

In the mystery cults it was common for the worshiper to use as a magic formula by which to identify himself with his god, a description of the characteristics of that god as if the god himself were speaking. So the goddess Isis speaks:

I am Isis, the mistress of every land. . . .  
I gave and ordained laws unto men.  
I divided the earth from the heaven.  
I showed the path of the stars.  
I ordered the course of the sun and moon.  
I devised business in the sea.  
I made strong the right.  
I brought together woman and man.  
I revealed mysteries to man.  
I made the right to be stronger than gold and silver.  
I ordained that the true should be thought good.

When Luke wrote his second roll, he followed the Greek literary practice of creating the speeches made by his chief characters. One of the measures of Greek literary talent was the extent to which the speeches created by Thucydides or Xenophon were really "in character," described the kind of man the speaker must have been to speak that way. How well Luke meets this test we all realize when we think how far our pictures of Peter and Stephen and Paul are determined by the words Luke put upon their lips.

We see clearly what the Isis worshiper conceived his goddess to be by the words he put upon her lips. We today would write:

Isis is the mistress of every land.  
She gave and ordained laws unto men.  
She divided the earth from the heaven.  
She showed the path of the stars.  
She ordained the course of the sun and moon.

She devised business in the sea.  
She made strong the right.  
She brought together woman and man.  
She revealed mysteries to men.  
She made the right to be stronger than gold and silver.  
She ordained that the true should be thought good.

On a far higher plane of religious expression than the incantation of Isis, one finds the prophets of Israel speaking for God himself. "Thus saith the Lord," is unconsciously supplied by each of us when we read,

Fear thou not, for I am with thee;  
Be not dismayed, for I am thy God;  
I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee;  
Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of  
my righteousness.

We have not only read the words. We have sung them deep into our inner consciousness:

Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed;  
I, I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;  
I'll strengthen thee, help thee and cause thee to stand  
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.

When through the deep waters I call thee to go,  
The rivers of woe shall not thee overflow;  
For I will be with thee thy trouble to bless,  
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

From among the greatest writings of the wise men of Israel we have that groping beyond the stark, aloof monotheism of their earlier thought to the profound sense of companionship within the experience of God even from the beginning. Wisdom is calling:

The Eternal formed me first of his creation,  
First of all his works in days of old:  
I was fashioned in the earliest ages,  
From the very first, when earth began;

I was born when there were no abysses,  
When there were no fountains full of water;  
Ere he sank the bases of the mountains,  
Ere the hills existed, I was born,  
When earth and fields were not created,  
Nor the very first clods of the world.  
When he set the heavens up, I was there,  
When he drew the vault o'er the abyss,  
When he made the clouds firm overhead,  
When he fixed the fountains of the deep,  
When he set the boundaries of the sea,  
When he laid foundations for the earth;  
I was with him then, his foster child,  
I was his delight day after day,  
Playing in his presence constantly,  
Playing here and there over his world,  
Finding my delight in humankind.

This conception of wisdom weaves its way through later Hebrew thought, in many varied forms and must have been very familiar to John. For the Hebrew word *wisdom* he used the Greek philosophical expression transliterated *logos* translated *word*. John was heir to all the Jewish thought of the *word* of God as charged with his mighty power:

As the rain and snow from heaven fall not in vain,  
But water earth until it yields  
Seed for the sower, food for hungry men,  
So with the promise [*word*] that hath passed my lips;  
It falls not fruitless and in vain,  
But works out what I will  
And carries out my purpose.

and of the *wisdom* of God:

She is the breath of the power of God,  
And a pure emanation of his almighty glory;  
She is a reflection of the everlasting light,  
And a spotless mirror of the activity of God,  
And a likeness of his goodness.  
Passing into holy souls, generation after generation,  
She makes them friends of God, and prophets.

He began his Gospel with that great poem of creation:

In the beginning was the Eternal Word,  
In the presence of God was the Word,  
Of God's own nature was the Word,  
For he was from the beginning with God.

All things came to be through him,  
Apart from him nought came to be,  
What is, is life in him alone—  
The life that shines as light to men.

So shone the light now in the dark,  
Nor could the darkness overwhelm the light;  
Soul of the world, which came to be through him:  
Yet has it never recognized him.

Once came he to his own  
And they rejected him;  
To those who welcomed him he gave  
Power to become the sons of God.

And so the Word took flesh and dwelt with men;  
We saw his glory as the only Son,  
Full like his Father, rich in grace and truth;  
Sharing in him we grow from grace to grace.

Moses the Law, but grace and truth brought Christ;  
None e'er beheld the veiled face of God—  
The Only Begotten, dwelling in the Father's breast,  
He has unveiled him now before our eyes.

So John translated for his Greek friends the meaning of the power of God and the wisdom of God revealed in the Son. "Behold the Lamb of God," said that John who baptized in water, "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world," and on the eve of Passover, when the paschal lambs were slain, the Lamb of God poured out his life that God might enter into the life of men and "make his abode with them." And John decreased and faded away before the eternal splendor of the Lamb.

From the hour when he drove the money-changers from the temple till the hour when he stood in the olive garden in the white light of the paschal moon, and said to the men who

would stay his arrest, "The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Jesus moves through the hills and valleys of the Holy Land with the divine serenity of God's only Son. Yet was the word made flesh, and he pitched his tent for a little on those hillsides. Weary and thirsty, he sat by a well and asked water of a Samaritan woman. Sustained and strengthened by the inner resources of God himself, he told her that the hour had come when neither in Jerusalem nor in the mountain of Samaria should men worship the Father; the old order changes, and men worship God the Spirit in spirit and in reality.

With quite delightful whimsey, he says to a man who has been ill for thirty-eight dragging years, "Do you really want to have health and strength?" and life floods into the useless limbs; the man stands straight and strong that Sabbath day. How well we know those men and women of whom John told his tales—Nathaniel, Nicodemus, Martha, Lazarus and the rest. The Seemists were quite wrong. Jesus was a man among men. Yet more, far more!

How could John bring to his friends the impenetrable mystery, the joyous reality in the answer of the only begotten Son of God to every simple need in sun and candlelight, and to the deepest and most soul-stirring yearnings of the heart of man? How could he help them to believe, to yield themselves with utter abandon to the Son of Man? The heart of the Gospel is expressed in the great discourses which John and his friends understood quite simply and naturally as his interpretations of Jesus:

He is the Bread of Life.

He is the Living Water.

He is the Light of the World.

He is the Good Shepherd.

He is the Resurrection and the Life.

He is the Way, the Truth, the Life.

He is the Vine and we the branches.



. . . . . And that Vine,  
Then first uplifted in its place, and hung  
With its first purple grapes, since then has grown,  
Until its green leaves gladden half the world,  
And from its countless clusters rivers flow,  
For healing of the nations, and its boughs  
Innumerable stretch through all the earth,  
Ever increasing, ever each entwined  
With each, all living from the Central Heart.

Some of those who read John's book, which by the middle of the second century was already transcribed in a codex—not on a roll—passed from friend to friend a story of the writer who had loved and hated so passionately.

Each First Day the aged John was helped into the little church. Ere the service closed the preacher would say, "Elder John, hast thou a word for us today?" "Little children, love one another," was the trembling reply. "Elder John," protested a youth, "always thou speakest thus. Hast thou no other word than this?" "My son, there is no other word. This comprehends them all. If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us."

Thus, out of the diversity of many interpretations, was the full-orbed circle of the love of God in Christ revealed to men.

## *Further Words to the Readers*

### THE SOURCES

To those men of outstanding scholarship in New Testament studies whose books, whose teaching, whose conversations with the Writer have pointed the way to the interpretations of the Gospel; to the poets and friends of God whose inner vision has contributed illumination; to all those whose gracious appreciation and suggestions about the manuscript-in-process have helped in the creation of this book the Writer would here express her grateful thanks.

### THE PORTRAIT OF JESUS

The Writer is deeply indebted to the artist, James Ashbrook, for permission to reproduce his portrait of Jesus Christ. The design is significant for its original technique, suggestive of the ever new forms in which men seek to give expression to their deepest insights and utter devotion to Jesus.

### TRANSLATIONS OLD AND NEW

*The Bible, Designed to Be Read as Living Literature*, arranged by Ernest Sutherland Bates (Simon and Schuster, 1936). This is a beautiful modern arrangement of the King James Version, with its unrivaled Elizabethan English, 1611.

*The American Standard Edition of the Revised Bible* (first published by Thomas Nelson and Sons in 1901, now issued by the International Council of Religious Education). This translation retains the Elizabethan English, but is based on earlier Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek manuscripts than those available in 1611.

*The Bible: A New Translation* by James Moffatt (Harper, Revised Edition, 1935). This is a vigorous, incisive translation, full of poetic charm and rugged strength.

*The Complete Bible, an American Translation*, the Old Testament translated by J. M. Powis Smith and a group of scholars; the Apocrypha and the New Testament translated by Edgar J. Goodspeed (University of Chicago Press, 1939). This translation is in the common speech of the present day, just as the original was written in the vernacular of its own time.

*The New Testament in Modern Speech*, translated by Richard Francis Weymouth (Pilgrim Press). This is as its subtitle suggests—An Idiomatic Translation into Everyday English—sometimes almost a paraphrase instead of a translation—in beautiful spoken English, by a British scholar who devoted a lifetime to the study of Greek and English that he might prepare this volume.

*The Apocryphal New Testament*, translated by Montague Rhodes James (Clarendon Press, 1924, 584 pages). This translation makes available for students a modern translation of those Gospels, Acts, Epistles and Apocalypses, which delighted some of the early Christians. After reading some of these writings, Dr. James' comment is increasingly significant: "It will very quickly be seen that there is no question of anyone's having excluded these books from the New Testament. They have done that for themselves."

*The Message of Jesus Christ* by Martin Dibelius, translated by Frederick C. Grant (Scribner, 1939, 192 pages).

*What Jesus Taught, the Sayings Translated and Arranged with Expository Commentary* by Burton Scott Easton (Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1938, 147 pages).

Two scholars have sought to recover from the Gospels in new and suggestive translations the Gospel before the Gospels. Professor Dibelius has chosen the early stories about Jesus, his parables, his sayings, miracle tales and stories about various people. His German translation has been rendered

into delightful English by Frederick C. Grant. The notes of explanation are full of suggestion. Dr. Easton has gathered out of the early records the teachings of Jesus, arranged the subject matter topically and added interpretive notes. These two books are invaluable for the insights they offer into the period before the Gospels were written.

#### BOOKS AMONG WHICH TO BROWSE

*The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development* by Charles Harold Dodd (Willett, Clark, 1937, 167 pages). To these three lectures on the preaching of the early Christians Professor Dodd brings the wealth of scholarship which characterizes his longer books. His lucid writing, his warm human sympathy, his deep devotion to truth make this book well worth the study which it demands.

*Early Christian Living* by Donald Wayne Riddle (Willett, Clark, 1936, 245 pages). A study of the life of the early Christians not only from the New Testament sources but from the material available in other early writings of Christianity.

*The Growth of the Gospels* by Frederick C. Grant (Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1933, 226 pages). This book helps the reader to appreciate how naturally the Gospels grew out of the developing life of the early church. It is of great value to the student who wishes to trace in detail the composition of the Gospels and their emerging place in the church's life, a life that is warm and human and glowing with deep devotion.

*The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* by Vincent Taylor (Macmillan, 1933, 214 pages). This book deals with Gospel origins showing how the beginnings were oral records only slowly being committed to writing in narratives, sayings and stories, revealing Jesus "in the lives, thoughts and desires of men throughout the formative period" until the emergence of those incomparable books, our Gospels.

*The Gospels, Their Origin and Growth* by Donald Wayne

Riddle (University of Chicago Press, 1939, 305 pages). This book sketches clearly the social situation from which each of the Gospels came, the impelling motive, "the effective need" which led to their production until the day when the Church "appropriating the Four Gospels made them the Fourfold Gospel."

*A History of Early Christian Literature* by Edgar J. Goodspeed (University of Chicago Press, 1942, 324 pages). Luke's story of Christianity ends with Paul in chains at Rome, and for many of us the story of early Christianity goes that far and stops. But this is only Part I in a great unfolding literature of how Christians met life situations through the centuries which followed. To Dr. Goodspeed we owe a great debt of gratitude for opening up to us the story of these early Christian writings, from the Letter to the Corinthians sent by Clement of Rome toward the close of the first century to the great Church History of Eusebius near the beginning of the fourth century. That was indeed an "heroic age when Christianity moved through persecution and conflict to become the religion of the Roman Empire."

## *Index of Quotations*

The following symbols have been used to indicate sources from which repeated quotations have been made:

The Holy Bible, Authorized Version.....	AV
The American Standard Edition of the Revised Bible. ARV	
The Bible: A New Translation.....	MT
The Complete Bible, an American Translation.....	CB
The New Testament in Modern Speech.....	RFW
The Message of Jesus Christ.....	DG
What Jesus Taught.....	BSE
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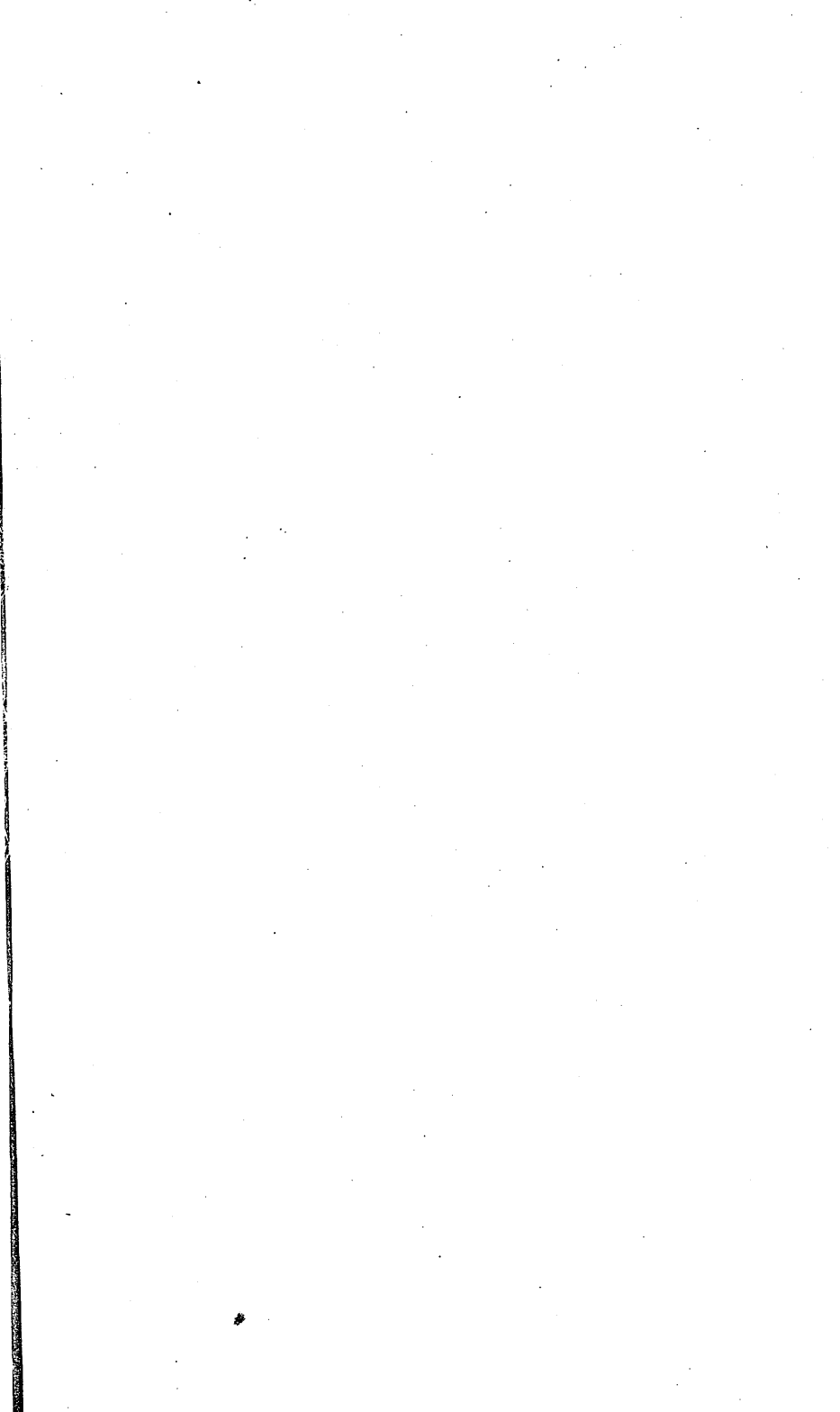
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